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# SCENTED DUST

*By*

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## FOREWORD

In February 1939, when I was on my way back to England by sea, I met an American lady who asked me if I knew of a book which would give her a bird's eye-view of India. She was particularly interested to know of the life in the villages, the economic position of the peasantry, our system of taxation, the condition of our women, our religions, our politics, what it was that prevented the people from joining hands against the British, our system of Government, the place in it of the British officer, how he behaved towards the people and what was the constitutional future of India. She was not willing to read any book written by a European no matter how objective. I have attempted to answer her queries in a language which is not my own, and if some of my readers feel that in discussing highly controversial issues, due deference has not been paid to their possible reactions, I crave their indulgence.

*September 18, 1941.*

**FIROZ NOON.**



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TO  
MALIKANEE BHAGBHARI  
MY MOTHER



## CHAPTER I

The sun had climbed the sky two halter-ropes high when Ali found himself standing on the terrace in front of his father's *daira*. It comprised a single-roomed private clubhouse and served as a meeting-place for the village men-folk who belonged to his father's faction. It was made of mud and had a door and two windows in each of the north and the south walls. It had a wide open space all round where during the summer their guests slept on bare beds but under a beautiful blue sky, studded with brilliant stars. Inside this *daira* were a few earthen pitchers resting on a locally-made wooden bench about four feet high. The tops of a few were covered with deep, wide earthen bowls. There could be seen only one touch of modern industry—a tin mug secured with a dog-chain to prevent its disappearance.

Ali was staring vacantly far into the clear sunlit sky. His thoughts presented many kaleidoscopic scenes. At one moment he thought of his college friends who had dispersed to their homes in all parts of the province. At another he thought of the day when he would have to



return to his college at Lahore, to his books, to his studies, to his games, to restaurants and cinemas. Sometimes his imagination enabled him to sail into the future, contrasting the dull life of the poverty-stricken village where his parents and relations lived, with what might be in store for him after his college career.

His thoughts went back to an incident of that very morning, when in its early hours he had been awakened by the love songs of camel-drivers who were leading a long string of camels, laden with goods, to the nearest market. They were passing along the main road which went past Ali's house. Some were laden with wheat and some carried enormous bags of cotton, almost touching the ground. A few of the stronger animals had men lying on the top of their bags, crouching forward and trying to sleep. There was a man on the last camel. There was always a danger of thieves untying the nose-strings of the rear camels from the tails of those in front and stealing the animals and the goods. The leading camel was the most handsome of all. He was young and powerful, and evidently aware of the proud position he occupied. He was continuously giving proof of his reactions to the approaching mating

season by throwing out his tongue on the right side and blowing it out like a football bladder and making a gurgling noise. He had a big bunch of small brass bells on each of his front knees. Their jingle provided an appropriate music for the sentimental lyrics of his master, who led him by the nose-string. The man's clear voice rang through the still and lonely morning air stirring many a longing heart—hearts longing for something not knowing what, hearts of the rising youth, unaware of the birth in them of adolescent love.

Ali was in his third year at a college in Lahore and was about 20 years of age. He was about five feet eleven inches in height, brown in colour and wore a moustache. He had high eye brows joined up in the middle and hair along the edges of his ears. He was broadchested and captained the college hockey team. He wore European clothes in Lahore or when he visited Government officers who came to Jamalpur; otherwise he always went about dressed in loin cloth and shirt like other village folk. The only eccentric thing he did in the village was that at night he always wore striped European pyjamas. He was wearing these at the moment as he stood on the terrace dreaming. His pleasant reverie

was suddenly broken by the sound of the jingle of a small bell. It was a short jingle, sudden and jerky. It came from behind the buildings on his right. These were his father's granaries, and behind them were shops and a street, from where came the sound. It was muffled, but Ali realised that the sound of the bell was moving along towards the edge of the granaries. He consequently fixed his gaze on the entrance to his father's compound.

As a group of people turned the corner, Ali saw a man riding a horse. "It must be the Tehsildar who is expected," he said to himself. There was a man walking at a dog-trot in front of the horse. He had no clothes barring a scanty and draggled loin-cloth, tucked up fairly high to prevent it sucking up all the dust raised by the man's naked feet. He wore no shirt, his bare head was protected against the sun only by his tousled black hair, which was as thick as the mane of an American mule. He held in his right hand a short bamboo lance with a spear-head tolerably clean and shiny. This was the village watchman—the lowest minion of the Sircar—who had gone to report a few births and deaths at the police station and at the same time to receive the Tehsildar. Deen,

as he was called, was born of a half-caste family. He belonged to a group of depressed class people who had lived on the outskirts of this village for some time past. They had originally been untouchables; nobody ate food or shared smoking-pipes with them. They were a roving tribe of mendicants and thieves. Under the Criminal Tribes laws and regulations passed by the white man, they had been deprived of their freedom and liberty to roam across the whole of the country, as they willed, begging and stealing. They had been forced under these regulations to seek a fixed abode, and some had eventually settled in this village, half of which belonged to Ali's father, who came of a family of squires fortunate enough or otherwise to have only one son in each generation. Consequently his property was undivided. The other half of the village had, owing to subdivisions of property, passed into the hands of small farmers, each owning not more than five acres.

These outcastes lived in huts a good distance from the village. They ate dead animals, as also jackals, lizards, and in fact everything they could lay their hands upon. At harvest time they helped the farmers cut their wheat and

other crops and pick their cotton. They were always paid in kind, for such was the custom for the payment of labour in the villages. They received a certain share of the crop in return for the work they did. For cutting wheat they received one sheaf for every twenty-one, and for picking cotton they received one-tenth as their wages. They also helped the farmers to chop cotton and brought their share of the chopped sticks, to burn in their ovens for baking bread in their homes. After the wheat had been trodden out by teams of oxen, these untouchable labourers winnowed it. Sometimes they had to wait a day or two before there was a breeze to help them in their task. They used wooden shovels with handles five feet long. With these they threw the wheat into the air. The breeze blew the chaff and the dust away from the corn as it fell down straight. These shovels were made of light, hard wood. They looked like snow shovels, but there was this difference between them, that whereas the snow shovel had its side edges raised and bent inwards, these grain shovels had a dip in the middle, parallel with the base and the front edge. This shape was found helpful in throwing the grain up into the air.

The farmers in this village were all Muslims. Consequently, these untouchable labourers were not allowed to share their smoking-pipes or their drinking bowls. This was a great deprivation for these poor men, whose own means of supplying these needs were non-existent or at the utmost very limited. One day one of the older half-caste men, while resting in the middle of the day during a winnowing expedition, felt very tempted to break the ice and give up his caste in order to fall in line with the Muslim residents of the village. All that stood between the farmers and these outcastes was a simple recitation by the outcastes of the sentence usually repeated when people embraced Islam : " There is no God but God and Mahomed is His messenger, and I believe in Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ and Mahomed and all the prophets." This old depressed-class man realised that the moment he recited this sentence he was as good as the best Muslim living in the village. His children would be free to marry the daughter of any Mussalman, no matter how great his position. That evening he made up his mind to go to the mosque. After the evening prayer he embraced Islam at the hands of the village *mulla*.

This was like the first breaking away of ice from a glacier, which comes tumbling down the valley once the start has been made. All the depressed-class men living in this village eventually embraced Islam. It was a very difficult task for them to give up their old and evil habits. They had to steel their hearts before they took the plunge. To give up the eating of rich greasy lizards and fat jackals was heart-breaking for them. The moment they became Muslims they could no longer eat dead or carnivorous animals, nor animals with uncloven hooves nor birds that caught their prey with their claws. Such was the injunction of the Muslim religion.

This particular young man who was running in front of the Tehsildar's horse had been born a Muslim, but he was still fired with the fanatical zeal of the new convert. He was meticulous in religious observances. He regularly attended Friday prayers in the mosque. He was also very careful in observing the religious injunction that when a Muslim goes to pray, which he must do five times a day, he must not only perform the necessary ablutions but his clothes must also be clean and unpolluted. Like all orthodox Muslims this young man,

although he wore only a loin cloth, always stepped aside whenever he saw a dog emerge from a pond. The water splashing from its unclean body must be avoided. The clothes made wet by this water would have to be washed before prayers could be said in them. It was with the object of keeping their clothes clean that when Muslim villagers went out to attend to the calls of nature in the open fields—for there are no water-closets in Indian villages and very few in towns—they always sat on their haunches on the ground. Never could a Muslim be seen to urinate while standing, for such a course would splash the unclean water on to the clothes and feet, and thus make the man's body and his dress unfit for use at prayer time. Some of the older orthodox Muslims of the villages had a pike fixed at the bottom of their sticks, with which they dug the ground soft before they sat down. Deen made use of his official symbol, the spear, for this purpose, and it was for this reason, and not on account of any brasso he used, that the head of his spear was always shiny and clean.

The weather was hot and men and beasts drank profusely from the small irrigation channels which crossed the road. But since



the men sweated enormously there was no need for them to disappear frequently behind the bushes, as would have been the case in the winter. It was essential for all men—if urinal crystal formation was to be avoided—to drink water and whey profusely throughout the hot weather. Many poor people who had no milch cows and thus could not get any whey to drink, suffered from stones in the bladder.

At the base of the spear-head belonging to Deen was tied the brass bell which had created the jingle that Ali heard. He realised that each time Deen had put his foot on the ground the bell had tinkled. Deen had in his left hand a dry and dirty leather belt with a brass buckle. The spear and the belt were his emblems of authority, for he was a servant of the great Sircar. He was the watchman, appointed by the headman. The duties of the village watchman never involved any watch and ward work. During the winter months, if cattle thefts assumed alarming proportions the farmers always volunteered to patrol the village all night long. His duties mainly consisted of taking messages from the headman to the police or revenue authorities. His remuneration consisted of a local cess, which he collected himself, and he

reported to the headman the names of those who refused to pay. The watchman was always a village menial, usually a baker or a weaver. He acted as a servant to all Government officers who visited his village. These exercised authority over the headman, who was Deen's boss, and consequently Deen had to be present twenty-four hours a day, hanging about where the officers were camped. The new Sircar was quite a different government from what had been known in the country for ages past. The Sikh king at Lahore existed no more. He had died years ago and his widow's armies had been defeated by the English, who had been rulers of this country by conquest for nearly eighty years. The authority and prestige of the Sircar were well established in the remotest villages of this Province, and no matter how unarmed and how helpless a man, so long as he bore an emblem of authority he was always feared and respected.

As Ali stood on the terrace watching the arrival of the Tehsildar and his group of hangers-on, a thought suddenly sprang in his mind. Would it not be grand if he could, at the climax of his career, retire as a Tehsildar? Would it

not be grand always to ride about on horse-back with a servant running on foot in front of him? Would it not be grand to enjoy executive and political power, including the powers of a magistrate, of a civil judge and of a revenue collecting and remitting officer? Would it not be a great experience to be able to send people to gaol? Would not all the enemies of his father be frightened of him? Dare they steal his cattle or the cattle belonging to their faction? Ali was still ruminating thus when the belled authority of law spoke:

"Please, Master Ali, where is my lord the village headman? The great ruler of this area, the Tehsildar, has arrived."

In order to acquaint him of the arrival of the great man, Ali ran to his father, whose house was only a hundred yards away. There was another headman for all the other small landowners, but Ali's father, being the more well-to-do, naturally received the attention of all official guests who arrived at the village. As headman of half the village he received by way of his remuneration five per cent of the land revenue, which in this case he collected from himself and paid into the nearest treasury.

His total emoluments from Government amounted to about Rs. 400 per annum. The whole of this money and a little more was spent by him in the enjoyment of this great privilege and in upholding the dignity of the high office he held. He had to act as host to all Government officials who in their regular course of business came for inspection visits. As a matter of fact, even if they had to inspect villages round about Jamalpur, they always came here, because the other villages were too poor to have anyone capable of entertaining Government officers. There were canal officers who came round to inspect canals and to fix the shares of the various farmers in the small watercourses. There were police officers, who came to enquire about criminals living in the vicinity of Jamalpur, and there were revenue officers, who came there most frequently in order to find out whether for purposes of land revenue collection the records were being correctly kept. These last were the most troublesome. The power of inflicting financial harm or conferring monetary advantage by way of land revenue remissions were so great in the hands of the village revenue record-keeper, the Patwari, that he was usually the spoilt child

of the whole area. Everybody made a great fuss over him. They gave him milch cows, which he always sent back after they had gone dry. He received fodder for his pony, free of cost, and he also received gifts of grain from those who had benefited by the patronage in his power. During his crop inspections the Patwari was always entitled to suggest revenue remissions. Defective seed, a particularly bad hail-storm or a spell of drought were officially recognised as legitimate excuses for meagre crops and revenue remissions; and since it was the Patwari who gave an inspection report on the crop, little kindnesses shown to this village petty revenue officer were always well repaid.

The three most important persons in the village were the watchman, who was appointed by the headman, the headman, who was appointed by the Sircar, and the Patwari who was a whole time Government servant. The watchman received 2*d.* or 4*d.* per hearth as his remuneration and served as the headman's messenger. The headman received five per cent. commission for collecting Government revenue, and if any farmer did not pay his tax it was deducted from the headman's commission. His duty was to report all crimes,

epidemics or contagious diseases, births and deaths, and all other sundry matters of local importance to the great Sircar through the nearest police station officer. It was also his duty to render assistance to all Government servants, from the vaccinator up to the I. C. S. officers. The land revenue record keeper received 20s. per month as his pay. But this was only about one-tenth of the perquisites which all patwaris were well known to receive. His corrupt practices could never be proved, for the bribe giver as well as the receiver were equally punishable under the Indian Penal Code. This could not be helped if Government servants were to be protected against false charges. Among the local responsibilities of the headman were the settlement of disputes over boundaries of land, questions of disputed brides, thefts of animals, besides a hundred and one little troubles which, if unchecked in time, were liable to assume wide proportions, sometimes culminating in riots.

Ali's father, six feet tall, the grand old man and the universally respected leader of his people, was sitting on a bare bedstead in the middle of his walled courtyard. He was smoking his water-pipe by the side of his wife, who

sat nearby on a low stool. He jumped off his perch the moment his son uttered the words "The Tehsildar is here." The wife was at the moment peeling potatoes and making preparation to cook the morning meal on the open hearth in which were burning and sizzling a few pieces of half dried acacia wood. There were the wooden ladle and the iron cooking pot, a water pitcher and a few chickens eating up all the little bits of food thrown away and there were also a few crows hopping about in the courtyard serving as scavengers in spite of a dead crow hung up on the tree nearby to frighten them away.

Ali's father, Khadim, put his right foot in his slipper, and while running tried to carry his other slipper on the big toe of his left foot, and actually succeeded in putting it on while in motion. He had grabbed at his turban which was lying in front of him on the bedstead, and wound it round his head while he hurried along the village street. He was a grey-bearded gentleman, sixty years old. As he left his house he told his son to bring some milk and sugar for the honoured guest, and while running towards his clubroom he shouted at some of his friends whom he saw en route, asking them

to collect the village menials who were to tend—of course honorarily—to the needs of the great man who had graced their insignificant abode by his ceremonial arrival. As Khadim approached the Crown representative and while still walking, he bent his head low, almost down to his knees, and saluted the Tehsildar by putting his right hand on his forehead as he was bending down. This done, on rising upright both his hands were, as if by intuition, folded in front of his abdominal protuberance in servile style, as if to say: "Here stands your slave, with folded hands; command what you wish."

There stood the Tehsildar, with a determined and dictatorial glare in his eyes. His legs were planted on the ground, like the legs of a camera tripod; there was a space of about eighteen inches between his feet. He needed this space to balance his top heavy body. The top button of his jodhpur breeches, made of khaki drill cloth, had snapped, for it's thread could be seen above the leather belt. Though the unbuttoned coat could not meet in front of his abdominal protuberance, yet it looked freshly washed and clean. His calves being as thin as match-sticks, the size of his heel and



instep being bigger than the circumference of the calf at its thickest, the breeches below the knee hung commodiously. A snub nose decorated his face, and he had a broken tooth in his upper jaw. He had shaved his beard, though he wore a small moustache. He had often been criticised by villagers for not growing a beard in the orthodox Muslim fashion, but they always did the criticising behind his back, for no one dared speak the truth in the presence of the great. He had married a second time on being promoted a Tehsildar. His bigamous, though lawful union, brought him a pretty wife of about twenty years. He himself was 54. Although the first year of his newly-married bliss had proved to be the memorable epoch of his otherwise insignificant life, signs of exhaustion had already set in. In course of time, he resorted to medical aids in the shape of aphrodisiacs. He took small quantities of these in cow's butter on an empty stomach first thing in the morning. He had at one time tried to strengthen his nervous system by eating real gold and silver leaves, which were made in Amritsar, by beating flat small pieces of the metals with wooden hammers. He had eaten these with sweet rice and other sweet puddings,

but they were not rejuvenating enough and he had gone on to other and more invigorating aids. But unfortunately these latter only stimulated to an early drain whatever little energy was still left in the otherwise spent and gray-haired man. The young wife had had no choice. She had never seen him before marriage, and having been brought up in purdah and being little educated, she did not realise her right under the Muslim law to refuse marriage if she did not like the man. According to this law, even if a minor girl were actually married to a man, on attaining majority she could always repudiate her marriage and refuse to live with the man. No girl who was a major could be legally married without her consent. But this woman had known none of her rights. Her mother had told her that even though the bridegroom was elderly, the alliance was likely to prove of great assistance to the family as a whole and to her brothers in particular. As her father had given his word to bestow the hand of his daughter on the Tehsildar, the girl felt more or less bound to marry him in order not to disgrace her father among his friends.

The Tehsildar's ears had been pierced for earrings when he was still young, but he wore

none. He had a wart on his right eye-lid and a mole in the dip of his chin. He possessed a ready-made bow tie, which by wear on rare official ceremonies but throughout his service, had in time achieved a fairly ragged appearance.

“Why were there no sons of donkeys, the village menials present when I arrived here?” thundered the Tehsildar in his stacatto voice. “Didn’t the headman know that the advance guard of the Settlement Officer were arriving?”

The headman stood there trembling.

By this time the village watchman had run round and collected a few men. He had been first to the weavers’ quarters and demanded one man, whose turn it was according to the village custom to render impressed and unpaid service on such occasions. The leader of the weavers knew the man whose turn it was to go with the watchman. He walked up to this particular man’s house and requested him to come away to do a little job that morning. The man concerned was at that moment engaged in weaving cloth. At the sight of his leader and the watchman, he stopped his shuttle and pulled his feet out of the pit. He told his wife to watch the premises while he was away and, willingly

submitting to his doom, followed the watchman like a tame sheep.

Deen thereafter went to the potter's quarters. The leader of these also called up the man whose turn it was to render this honorary service. He was at that time laying layer after layer of sun-dried village dung on row after row of mud pottery in his open-air kiln. There were no flues in this kiln. The smoke drifted all over the place. The village refuse provided a cheap fuel, but the system deprived the land of its natural source of revitalisation. The potter's wife was cleaning the donkey stalls and her son was chopping green maize and millet fodder and mixing it with dry wheat chaff for the animals, who stood by, occasionally swinging their long ears to flick off the troublesome flies.

The watchman, accompanied by his humble and faithful followers, thereafter collected a shoe-maker who was to provide the bath water, a carpenter who was to chop the kitchen fuel, and a blacksmith who was to provide charcoal for the Sahib's kitchen.

He also collected a depressed class representative to clean the Sahib's tents. A thing that had always puzzled the sweeper, and through him the village folk was the fact that

the Englishmen every day dirtied beautiful, clean-looking wooden boxes containing basins. Why they should do this filthy business inside their own tents and houses was beyond their comprehension. To the villager the most suitable place for his morning duty was an open field, where nature provided fresh air in abundance. The country folk always felt that these wooden boxes, which were carried about on camel-back from village to village with the luggage of the Englishmen, were so beautiful and clean that they should have served as repositories for household goods and clothes. One Baluch chief who had been invited to a Viceregal Court (Darbar) at Delhi complained to the Political Officer in charge of his party that unless he were taken to a field instead of being shut up in a small room he would die of congestion of the bowels.

The watchman, having left these men at the *daira*, went the customary round of the village on an egg and chicken collecting expedition. He also went to the houses of different farmers and borrowed bedsteads and pitchers full of milk, asking them to come along in accordance with the usual custom and help in pitching the tents of the officer and his staff. The tents were

arriving that morning. Tent pegs were to be supplied by the carpenter. There was the Sahib's living-tent, his office tent, his bathroom tent, and tents for servants and for a kitchen. The Tehsildar himself was to live in the *daira*, a little distance away from the tents of his boss. The Tehsildar was accustomed to talking very loudly to farmers and to other members of the public. He often shouted at them using no ordinary language, with the result that he always felt safer if he were a good distance away from his immediate superior. His policy, based on many years of experience, was that if an officer is to get work out of the public he must look fierce and behave in a rough manner almost bordering on lunacy ; the idea being that the turmoil created would be so unpleasant that ordinary human beings would be glad to buy their peace at any price. He also remembered an incident which happened some years back. On that occasion some of the villagers, not having the courage to speak to the Sahib themselves, achieved their object through an influential neighbouring squire, who carried their complaint to the Sahib. The Tehsildar was much addicted to abusing respectable farmers. In fact, it was alleged that he always used uncommonly

foul and filthy language. His common form of abuse was "you son of a bitch." This had become such a permanent feature of his conversation that he could not talk for more than a minute without using these words; one might say this abuse had become the "pillow" of his conversation, as the Persian idiom has it, for he rested his talk on it every two or three sentences. On that occasion the great Sahib had sent for him in the presence of the dignitary who had brought this complaint to him. When the Tehsildar was told by the Sahib what the complaint was, he protested his innocence, and after having uttered two or three sentences in defence he rested his conversation as usual on "Which son of a bitch has told you this?" His white boss had benignly smiled at him and said: "I quite realise the hollowness of the charge." The Tehsildar well knew that if he were to stop at night somewhere near his Sahib's tent and some untoward incident arising out of his flowery language were to take place and should there be renewed resentment against the great Sircar on that account, in view of his previous record he was sure to lose his promotion, if not be actually dismissed.

And so, he always kept at a safe distance from the Settlement Officer.

About mid-day the camels laden with the Settlement Officer's personal luggage, his office records, and tents, all arrived together. A few of his servants were seated on—or rather were hanging onto,—the camel's backs. Some of the senior servants were sitting in square baskets slung on the sides of these leggy animals. The baskets containing the servants were fastened together with ropes, and provided a very comfortable means of conveyance. Among the servants thus seated in the baskets was a Mug cook from Bengal. He came from a province where either the bullock cart or the boat was the chief means of locomotion. Camels were not numerous in his country and their movement made him sick. As he alighted from his mount he looked pale and worn out. This was rather a misfortune for the headman, for a cook in a bad mood meant an ill-fed sahib, and God save the villager who went into the presence of a liverish sahib in the morning. The worse the temper of the cook the higher the price in cash which the headman had to pay him to bring him to a proper equilibrium of mind, otherwise all the eggs collected by the headman were bound



to be declared rotten ; meat was bound to be thrown out as being smelly and high ; milk was sure to be declared curdled and not fit for tea. This always meant that the Sahib in his gentle manner would enquire of the Tehsildar if it was possible to buy wholesome things in that village. Such an enquiry was always sufficient for the Tehsildar to lavish profuse compliments on the heads of the headman's ancestors and his women-folk. Although the Sahib always paid money, it seldom found its way into the pockets of the people who supplied the eggs, the milk and the chickens.

The camel carrying the Mug cook went down on its front knees with such a great jerk that the cook felt that all his inside had jumped up into his gullet. As the camel moved down on his hind legs and then finally came down on his front legs, the cook felt as if he were on board a P. & O. steamer and were being tossed and pitched across the Indian Ocean during heavy monsoon weather. The headman very cautiously led him to his bed and started to massage his legs until the man recovered. Then a ten-rupee note was quietly but noticeably pushed into his pocket as the usual tribute of the headman to the Sahib's cook. It was really

insurance money, insurance against the risk of eggs going addled.

That night the headman sat up late exchanging news with his village folk who had been working all day long. The headman did not retire until he heard the heavy snoring of the over-fed Tehsildar. When he reached home, he found his faithful and loving wife still awake, keeping his morning meal warm, for she knew that the man would never get the time to have a bite of any kind of food during the whole day. She had learned this by past experience and knew that when the great Sircar arrived in the village her husband had to work at least sixteen hours a day without a break.

Ali also had kept awake along with his mother, in the excitement and expectation of knowing quickly and directly from his father all the great things that had happened that day. He was still awake when his father arrived at midnight. He listened to the conversation which took place between his parents, and as he heard what his father was saying his heart was throbbing all the time, making him excited and keen to give vent to his own pent-up feelings and ideas. Ali had been educated at St. Peter's School at Lahore. It was a school

staffed by God-fearing, hard-working, honest and kind-hearted teachers from an order of monks in Europe. It was really run for the benefit of the children of Eurasian and Anglo-Indian residents in the province. Ali had been at this school for six years and stood very high in the Matriculation examination before he went on to a college at Lahore. The excellent education at this school had given him a wide outlook on world affairs and broadened his mind by bringing him in contact with boys belonging to all communities, particularly Europeans. He had somehow or other become bitter against the West, for in this school were some Indian Christian boys whom one might call half-castes, boys who were wrongly alleged to have the faults of their own race and none of the virtues of the country of their adoption. The Christian missionaries, though they now allowed the Indian converts to keep their Indian names, yet at one time in the beginning of their proselytising campaign gave those who entered their flock English names, like Mr. Smith, Mr. Jones, Mr. Brown. The descendants of these men in course of time began to think that their home was in London and that they had become black owing to the vagaries of the Eastern sun. This

was the beginning of the great controversy between the Eurasian and the European, the latter trying to throw the former back into the brown man's cauldron, a course which the Indian Christian bearing an English name strongly resented and resisted; he wished to remain within the enchanted circle of white men, at least for the purpose of securing jobs, which were for the moment in the gift of the white man. The vast majority of boys at this school were of this class. Their manner of talking was always rude, and they referred to Ali and a few other Indian boys who had been lucky enough to get admission into this European school as 'niggers'. They always made a point of making the Indian boys feel that the white man had conquered their country and that they were a subject race. These things had made Ali's young mind very bitter and his outlook on the political future of India was very 'left'.

As his father and mother were talking he was simmering with rage at the abject manner in which his father had behaved towards the Government officers who had arrived in their village. He was also angry at the idea of the thankless slavery and drudgery involved for his father in the discharge of his duties as headman

of his village. He was lying awake in bed, with a thin sheet covering him to keep off the mosquitoes. He was young and very impulsive. He could hold himself no longer. He pushed the sheet from his face, jumped up and started to shout at his father :

“ Why do you continue in this service ? You make no money out of it. I know that you are always down at the end of the year. This headmanship involves you in endless toil. The treatment meted out to you by these minions of the Sircar is no better than a slave receives at the hands of his purchasers in the middle of Africa. You are often insulted in public, and you swallow these insults. I cannot understand your patience and your lack of courage and self-respect. Why don't you resign this job and let some one else do the dirty work ? I know that in the past you have often had to procure witnesses for the police to support them in Crown prosecutions to prove cases for which no evidence was available. Between you and the police you put up false witnesses and cook evidence. Even if you are trying to prove facts which are true, your witnesses are false. You turn our courts into a mockery. You help the police to tutor the witnesses and make them

learn their parts by heart. Why don't you chuck the whole damned thing, father ? You create more and more enemies for yourself and for your children as the years go by. You have to lead a life which is far beyond your means, your capacity and your nature. You will probably leave us all heavily in debt and for the rest of our lives we shall be slaves in the hands of money-lenders. Because you are headman and you have to wear white clothes and meet great officers, you feel that you will lose your dignity, prestige and position if you plough with your own hand. It is your sense of false dignity as a headman which prevents you from walking behind a yoke of oxen and tilling your own soil. You do not want your shoes to be filled with dust as you walk behind your plough. You do not want your clothes to get dirty by coming into contact with the cattle and with their fodder. You are thus forced to leave your cultivation either to crop-sharers or to servants. In either case, the land does not get the service it deserves and you do not reap the fruits which it can bear for you. If you were to earn your living as a humble labourer you would in the end be better off than you would as a headman. Why do you do it, father ?”

Khadim was listening attentively to every word that fell from the lips of his son. He noticed a constant smile on the face of his wife, who was feeling at one with her son as he addressed his father. Khadim himself, irrespective of what was being said, was feeling proud of his son, who had an opinion of his own and who was intelligent enough even at his age to think deeply over matters which concerned grown-up persons. He smiled.

“ My son, you are still very young. As you grow older, the knocks that you receive in life will destroy the exuberance and enthusiasm with which you are full at the moment. I am not suffering all these ignominies to win glory for myself. There is no comfort or joy in what I do and I want you to realise that I feel exactly as you do regarding this particular aspect of my life which has come under your criticism. But you have to think of another side of this question also. There was a time when I used to think of only one side of the matter as you do, but the world has taught me wisdom. I have had some bitter lessons in life. I often, even now, think of resigning my job, but what will be the result ? First of all, our hereditary

enemy, our fourth cousin who is living in the other part of this village and who is a co-sharer in this estate, will immediately apply for the vacant post. His success will be hailed throughout these parts as my defeat and disgrace, and you as my son and all my friends and relations will not escape the loss of that prestige which I now possess, nor will you avoid the blemish of the disgrace which is bound to follow. The public will not know why I resigned. They will all think that I was kicked out of my job for some fault or another. They will imagine all sorts of vile motives for my resignation. Our own menial servants will not obey my orders. I shall have no influence left in the official world, and think what that will mean. Even the meanest neighbour will tear up our land boundaries, cut down our trees without our consent in all cases of disputed ownership. Nowadays everyone comes to me asking for my favours and for my help in judicial and other cases where my influence with officers can be of assistance to them in their disputes when on merits they would fail. I am really taking all this bother for your sake, for when you have finished your education I want you to get into Government service, and without influence such



as I possess you will never get a Government job. There was a time in India when everyone believed in the wisdom of the old saying : 'Foremost is agriculture, then comes trade, and the worst thing comes last, service.' But nowadays the tables are turned. There is no money left in trade and there is nothing to be gained from agriculture, but service provides you with a secure and fixed income. Whether trade and crops fail or not, the Government servant continues to draw his salary. Service not only gives you money, but also power and prestige. It enables you to be of service to your people. You know as well as I do that money is everything in the world to-day, and it is in service alone that you can be sure of earning or saving any money. We have an old saying : 'Oh gold, you are not God, but by God you have the two qualities of God. You can hide sin and you can help in time of need.' This proverb is doubly true to-day, because service not only gives you money but it also gives you political power, a power which possesses the magic which the adage ascribes to gold. If you are in Government service and exercise political power, whether you have money or brains or neither, you can always get away with everything.

“It is all very well for you to try and preach high morals, but these are no use when you are poverty-stricken. Penury leads to limitless degradation. When a man is poor, when the rats of hunger are nibbling at the inside of his stomach, what will he not do? Have you not heard the saying: ‘That which turns lions into foxes is Poverty, is Poverty, is Poverty.’ Don’t you go away with the idea that I do not feel as you do. I am a human being like anyone else. I do it all for your sake, my son. Once you are on your legs, I shall be glad to follow any advice you give me. The time is not yet for me to throw up the sponge. When you consider the case dispassionately, you will find that after all the Britisher is not quite such a bad fellow as you make him out to be. He has given us peace and security in the country. He taxes us the farmers, no more than his predecessors did.”

“Yes, but he holds all the big jobs himself.”

“True, my son. These jobs we farmers would not have held under any Government. Let those who want the jobs fight the white man for them. As a farmer, I am more concerned with the safety of my cattle, my person, my honour and my liberty, and these are secured to

me by perfectly well-managed courts of law. Nobody dare raise a finger against me without the risk of suffering the consequences of his unlawful act."

"Father, you belong to that old school of men who will be content with anything in the world."

"Don't be angry, my son. I shall not stop you from putting the world right. For myself, I like to drag along as quietly and peacefully as I have done in the past."

"You think that the dog which is on a chain but is well housed and fed is better off than a free dog that hunts as he likes—in the jungle."

"There are always two ways of looking at things, my son. When dogs are free to hunt, they do some damage somewhere. They first of all destroy everything else in the jungle and then themselves die of starvation. Unless the personal liberty and freedom to do harm to others is curbed, no group of human beings can live peacefully together for long under jungle law."

"I don't mind having my liberty curbed by my own people."

"The days of the autocracy of the white man are coming to a close. Let us hope that you

young fellows will give the country something better."

That night the family went to sleep fatigued and thoughtful. Ali saw the force of his father's mature arguments, yet the fire of youth and self-respect was burning with fury in this precocious youth, and the last thing before going to sleep which he asked his father was :

"What is a Settlement Officer ? Does he settle disputes ?"

"It is getting late, my son. You go to sleep now. Put your head on the pillow and rest and do not get excited. I will answer this question in the morning."

With an unsatisfied thirst for knowledge, Ali looked towards his bed. He noticed that there were two pillows, one at each end of it. His father's bed had disappeared. The Head Clerk had it. While the headman talked a little to his wife about food problems of the following morning, Ali unobtrusively slipped into his part of the bed.

The mother woke up first and then the father, and Ali was the last to awake. The sun was fully up, and after saying good morning to his father the first question Ali asked was :

"What is a Settlement Officer ?"

"He is not a man who settles disputes, except a few revenue and land cases. For the settlement of disputes there are civil and criminal courts. This officer settles other things, but certainly he does settle."

"What does he settle, father? It is all very puzzling. Why don't you tell me? The English word 'settlement' means a voluntary devolution of money by a man to his wife or to his daughter. Is this gentleman who is coming here to-morrow going to make such a settlement on this village?"

"No, my son."

"Then what kind of a settlement is it?"

"It is another kind of settlement. This English word has quite a different meaning in this country."

Ali seemed more perplexed than ever. He racked his brain for possible meanings of the word 'settlement.' Then he suddenly turned round to his father and said :

"Father, I know another kind of settlement. In the olden days the white men of Europe went and settled in different parts of the world and formed colonies and dominions in those lands under the British Crown. Is this

Settlement Officer coming to our village to make a settlement here on the lines of those white settlements in the dominions? Is he coming to settle some new farmers in this village? Is he going to turn us out of our lands? If so, why? What wrong have we done? If not, how can he settle more people on this land, which is not enough even for us who are here already?"

"No, my son, he is not going to do anything of the sort. He knows as well as we do that the average holding per farmer in this village is only five acres. The land according to our customary law is divided equally amongst all the sons on the death of their father. I do not know where this sub-division is going to end, because the holdings in this village are already very uneconomic."

Khadim was descended from a Hindu Rajput family who had embraced Islam. In matters of inheritance he still followed the Hindu customary law and not the Moslem law, under which daughters also inherited.

"What is the use of turning us out when he knows that the new settlers, if any, would do no more for the Sircar by way of payment of taxes than we are doing at present. If we continue to pay our land revenue regularly there is no point

in getting rid of us. I must not forget that there is the village common land. It is still uncultivated and the cattle of the whole village, including those of the shopkeepers and the menials, and others who do not own any land, graze over this area. They have enjoyed the usufruct of this village common for centuries past. As a matter of fact, it is the only place where their cattle can go to stretch their legs or from where these people can get a little fuel for cooking their meals. It is also the only place where the moneylender and his family can go to attend to the call of nature when they happen to fall out with the farmers."

"Why the only place?"

"I know of a case where an unscrupulous and over-exacting moneylender fell out with all the farmers. He started litigation and had all their animals and property attached in execution of his decrees. The farmers took their revenge. They sat near the fields and prevented this particular moneylender and his family from entering their fields. This brought the moneylender to his senses, and all cases were compromised and the farmers' cattle—which were nearly starved to death in the police pound—returned to them."

"Sorry I interrupted, father."

“ This village common has come down like this from times immemorial. The landowners once tried to have it divided in accordance with our shares of the cultivated land, but the moneylender in our village, who is related to high officials by marriage, used his influence to have our petition, at first sat upon in the various law courts, and finally rejected at Lahore—the headquarters of the Provincial Government—for he and the other shopkeepers would have lost the use of it, if it had been split up and distributed amongst the farmers. That village common land partition-dispute has dragged on for the last twenty years, but through the influence of this scheming moneylender of ours we have never succeeded, although our neighbours in the adjoining villages have already had their common land partitioned. No doubt, there is force in what the shopkeepers and the menials allege, that if the common land were split up there would be no place on which their cattle could graze. Our Sircar is powerful, but unfortunately it is helpless against certain forces, such as the influence of money and the press, and both these are the exclusive privilege of moneylenders in this country. Consequently, we farmers do not stand the ghost of a chance



if we ever come up against moneylenders. If you touch one of them the whole class come together like crows over a captured one of their kind. The great Sircar never wishes to touch a moneylender, not even with a pair of tongs, and so he flourishes. No, my son, the Settlement Officer is not coming to settle any new farmers in this village. He is going to do another kind of settlement. What it is you will soon find out for yourself."

"What is the Hindustani word for 'settlement,' father? Nowadays it has become the custom to use a great many foreign words in our language. It is a pity, but it can't be helped. Everybody is doing it. It seems to be rather the fashion to mix up languages. Do you know what I heard at a railway station the other day?"

"No."

"The station master said to a goods clerk : 'Mother *ne dee thi ik* cow, *wuh* only one pint *deti thee* milk. *Hamne* thankfully *kar di* return.' A lot of other foreign words have crept into our language."

"Which others?"

"There are several French words, for instance, our words *Kartoosh* for the French word *cartouche*, *Patloon* for *pantalon*, *Haspatal* for

*hospital*, *Kamiz* for *chemise*. Among many English words *Lachar* for *lecher* is understood in all our villages. *Time* and *School* are almost Hindustani words now. We have even a Turkish word *kashak* meaning spoon. All the villagers in Western Punjab use this word. No doubt there are many other words of Turkish derivation still prevalent in our tongue. But tell me the Indian word for 'settlement,' father."

"It is *bando bast*."

"That is a Persian word. Our language is full of these. That is not surprising considering that the court language was Persian for nearly seven hundred years. Even the English adopted it as their court language until there were enough of us to do their work in the English language. This word *bando bast* means to tie and to bind, which suggests the binding of a thing twice over so that there is no possibility of escape."

"That is right, my son. All kings and governments have throughout past ages done their best to bind the poor farmers and landowners with laws of taxation so severe and strict that our class have always been grinding the mill without receiving any of the grist."

"Explain it fully, father."

“ My son, this officer is coming out here to find out what the income of each farmer from his land is and to decide what tax the Sircar can impose with a fair prospect of collection. He will make a lot of fuss. Thousands of pages of paper will be blackened and in the long last the net result will be that we shall continue to pay what we have always paid. If the Sircar were to issue orders from Lahore for the continuance of the existing tax without further investigation, tons of money, which is now spent on the settlement staff, would be saved. However, if there were no duplication of work or unnecessary noting on files what would all the poor Government servants do ? If they create work for themselves even if it be the churning of water, I do not blame them for it. We have to grind the mill in any case, so why bother about the Sircar and the taxes ? I must go now.”

Khadim left his house early and went round to see that everything that was needed was supplied promptly to the guests in the camp. The tents were all opened out, pegs planted, guy ropes straightened, middle poles pushed up, and tent equipment, including the inevitable commode, laid out. The straw on the floor was also spread out and Punjabi gaol-made *durris* laid

The clerical staff, including the head clerk of the Settlement Officer, were expected in the afternoon.

The head clerks of all officers in India are a special institution. They are a class by themselves. This particular gentleman who happened to be the Settlement Officer's head clerk was famous for his corrupt practices. He was afflicted with the evil habit of yawning in court while sitting by the side of his officers during court hours. One of his superiors, by name a Mr. Bucknell, having despaired of curing him of this habit, one day, as the head clerk opened his mouth to yawn, quickly snatched the ink-pot from his table and with unmatched skill and precision poured the contents down his clerk's gullet. The head clerk spat it back on his face, and into his eyes. Mr. Bucknell jumped from his chair in a rage and wanted to box his clerk's ears but the latter did not find it difficult to dodge the fists of his infuriated but blinded master. This was not the only incident of yawning which took place in India but the only one which met with this particular cure. Most clerks' wives cooked the morning meal in a hurry, as the office started at ten, with the consequence that the starch of the half-baked wheaten

*chapatis* (bread) gave most of the Government servants a bad liver. Although the general public in their heart of hearts said 'bravo' to the officer, yet the head clerk had at last got hold of a genuine cause of grievance against his immediate superior, and, with the help of his head clerk friends higher up, did not find it difficult to secure a speedy transfer to the court of this Settlement Officer, who was well-known to be gentle and kind in his manners. How this head clerk turned this transfer into a most lucrative appointment, only he and the head clerk in the court of the officer who ordered the transfer, knew.

The head clerk of the Settlement Officer had very wide powers, for the judicious and proper exercise of which his palm needed constant greasing. First of all, each litigant or petitioner whose case was adjourned to another date had to receive a chit giving him the day of the next hearing. If a rupee did not flow into the head clerk's hands as he parted with the chit, the head clerk saw to it that the next time the man received a chit it bore the wrong date. For the issuing of writs, summonses, processes for the execution of decrees and for fixing of hearings to suit the clients, he always needed a little

*bakhsheesh*. His wife had once by mistake let out, in answer to another woman's question in a railway carriage, that her husband's extra income, that is over and above his lawful salary of Rs. 200 a month, was about Rs. 800 a month. But the head clerk did not come to grief, since the man who heard this all-important news and complained to a police-officer friend was told that courts of justice placed no credence on hearsay evidence.

Be it remembered that in the villages there were manifold offices which carried some sort of privilege, remuneration, dignity or other attraction. The farmers hankered so much after these that the great Sircar had by this means evolved a method of securing a great hold on the vast majority of the village folk, who, like most men, usually aspired to rise on the ladder of life. Above the headman there was the Zaildar, perhaps one over twenty headmen. The Zaildar was paid about Rs. 500 per annum. Then there were the Sufed Poshes, which literally meant 'wearers of white clothes.' This was a title conferred on deserving farmers who had helped the administration over a considerable length of time. Once a man became a Sufed Posh his next step was a Zaildarship,

provided there was a vacancy. Then there were the Kursi Nashins ('sitters on chairs'). This title carried the privilege of being provided with a chair when the holder sought an interview with a Government officer. When others loitered about and tried to find protection against the burning sun by squatting under the speckled shade of acacia trees round about the bungalow where the officer was housed, the Kursi Nashin received a chair in the Sahib's verandah and sat there comfortably, conscious of the longing and envious glances of his less fortunate friends farther away.

Whenever a new settlement took place in a district, and this calamity was supposed to occur once in about forty years, the grant of all these dignities and titles was transferred from the ordinary source of this benevolence, namely the Chief Executive Officer of the District, to the Settlement Officer. Such a transfer was essential in the interest of the settlement work, for if the men had nothing to expect from the Settlement Officer their assistance in his work would have been unwilling and perhaps altogether lacking. He made use of this power to persuade all the local leaders to agree to his

proposals regarding the enhancement, if any, in the total revenue to be collected from a particular village. These baits or threats—for the Settlement Officer also had the power to dismiss the dignitaries from their offices—made the public more docile than would otherwise have been the case. The head clerk did a roaring business out of these transactions, particularly when new men were to be appointed or when any were recommended for dismissal by the lower revenue staff.

As soon as it was known that the head clerk had arrived, important squires from all over the neighbourhood began to trickle in one by one as did also pitchers full of milk and tins full of clarified butter. By the time the Settlement Officer was to arrive there was quite a considerable motley crowd, such as one sees at fairs. A number of horses, with their gaudy trappings—surrounded by horsemen dressed garishly—could be seen scattered about under the trees in close proximity to the camp area. All these men had arrived there in case the Settlement Officer wanted to see some tent-pegging, but even if he did not, they expected to have an opportunity of going out to receive him at the boundary of the *zail*. It was well



understood that such official visits enabled all the farmers to descend upon the unfortunate village where the camp happened to be. They brought with them not only clouds of dust but empty stomachs. In their appetites they were no less ravenous than the hungry wolves of Siberia or the coyotes of the Canadian prairies. They had free meals at the cost of the poor villagers, and they always sat down to their meals with revengeful hearts, for they all had at one time or another suffered similarly at the hands of their neighbours.

## CHAPTER II

Everyone put on their Sunday clothes and gathered together round about Khadim's *daira*, so that they could start out together and move to the boundary of the *zail* (administrative unit comprising several villages) to receive the Settlement Officer. They all stood in a crowd, some of them coughing and spitting, others smoking, or smoothing their beards, or twisting their moustaches. Some were shouting at each other, conveying messages to places no less than forty or fifty yards away. The atmosphere was full of bustle, and gave the impression that great things were about to take place.

The Tehsildar was the central figure, and all the people had their eyes fixed on him. The previous evening before he went to sleep something had happened. He had heard a knock at his door and granted permission for the visitor to enter. It was the local *mulla* (priest) in charge of the village mosque. It was his duty to lead the prayers five times a day, whether the faithful happened to turn up or not. Besides being the village medico, he indulged in giving talismans to people to cure them of

various diseases. Some farmers took charms from him which they hung up across roads on strings, and they made their cattle pass under them every evening as they came home. This was supposed to make them immune to rinderpest and glanders. The great religion of Islam had, in the hands of this *mulla*, degenerated into the art of a magician, a thing which had not infrequently happened to many great religions when their followers fell from the high standards originally set for them. This *mulla* had once claimed to have cured a man stricken with rabies. He was widely reputed to have this wonderful power. He had on that particular occasion asked the colour of the dog that bit the man, and having received this information, he made a friend of the rabies-stricken man knead some flour. On opening a lump of it there appeared dog's hair of the same colour as the dog that had bitten the patient. Immediately this miraculous appearance of the hair in the flour was hailed as a sign of the efficacy of the prayer and charm of the *mulla* and it was foreboded at once that the patient was bound to be cured. If the hair had not appeared inside the flour, it would have meant that the bitten man was unfortunate and that the *mulla's*

prayer had not been answered. Whether the appearing of the hair depended on the amount of tip which the *mulla* received beforehand needed hardly a conjecture. People went to him from far and wide, bringing their rabies-stricken relations. They also brought presents with them. Not infrequently men came to him with their wives and a request for the exercise of his good offices in persuading the Almighty to confer upon them the great gift of a child. Some complained that they had only daughters and no sons. He usually gave them a talisman to be tied round the waist of the woman while she lay in bed. If a boy was born, naturally the credit went to the *mulla*. If it were a girl, they always said: "Never mind, it was our *Kismet*; what could the poor *mulla* do? He did his best." The *mulla* in any case always stood a 50-50 chance of success. The ignorant and the illiterate who knew nothing about the Islamic religion flocked to him continuously.

But there was one man in the village who had served as a lascar on a Norwegian merchant ship and travelled all over the world. He had seen life in many ports and met people in many Islamic countries, and learnt from them

something about true Islam. The realisation that this great religion depended mainly on action and not merely on belief had dawned upon him. He knew that Islam was not only a faith but also a morality, and that in accordance with Islamic tenets everyone would be judged in accordance with his conduct, no matter what his religious belief, provided he believed in God. Islam did not contemplate the occurrence of any event without the existence of a cause. Islam taught people that if they desired to achieve a certain end, they must create circumstances which would facilitate the achievement of that end and bring about the desired result, and that whenever the same circumstances occurred similar results could be expected. The lascar had been told by an Arab workman who was a farmer by profession that according to true Islam a man had to select good soil, good seed, plough it hard, sow at the right time, irrigate the field at proper intervals and protect it against wild beasts and birds, and then and then alone he could expect to reap a good harvest. If the seed did not grow, you could not blame God. There must have been a reason for it. God had his own laws, which he altered for no man. No matter how much a

man prayed to God to make the sun rise from the west instead of the east, he could not succeed in having his prayer granted. No matter how fervently the *mulla* prayed for a woman to be granted a son, if she were barren she would never get one.

This lascar, by name Pir Tor ('priest smasher') knew that unless a ship sailed it could not reach another country, and no ship ever came back to its home country unless it had first left a foreign port. He used to tell the farmers to stand on their own legs and help themselves and not depend on the charms and the talismans of this ignorant *mulla*. He used to talk so frankly in the village that many a time the *mulla's* friends conveyed every word of his conversation to him. The lascar shaved his beard and did not keep the fast, though he took jolly good care that he smoked his pipe and ate his food during Ramadan inside his house. There were no witnesses of his delinquencies, but everybody knew that he did not follow the Islamic injunctions during the month of fasting. The village *mulla* consequently hated this man not only for his unorthodoxy but also because he was setting a bad example to the village and incited people to rebel against

his lawful authority in matters religious and spiritual. Nothing would have pleased the *mulla* more than to have him turned out of the village. But, much against the wishes of the *mulla*, the man continued to live in the village and to dispel superstition and undermine respect for the village priest.

The *mulla* had gone to the Tehsildar that night to complain against the lascar and to have him turned out of the village if possible, whether by lawful or unlawful pressure he did not care. He well knew that the provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code were very strict and no officer in the land had any power besides that mentioned in those Acts. He also realised that this request was of an unusual nature and he was very doubtful whether the Tehsildar would be able to assist him in getting rid of his enemy. But he liked to hope against hope and felt that there was no harm in pressing his case.

During the course of this nocturnal talk the *mulla* had quietly told the Tehsildar that there was a man in the village who was sapping all respect for authority. He shaved every day and had a bath every day and walked about the streets with his head bare. He was young and

good-looking ; he had saved up little money ; he was not married ; he smoked and also drank. He had been known to buy opium occasionally. He was carrying on with his neighbour's wife and daughter. He started flirting with the mother first, she was past meridian, but through her he had worked his way to the heart of the daughter. Though he had not been caught red-handed, villagers were sure that he was guilty, for he had been known to talk to this particular woman over the boundary wall between their compounds. The *mulla* assured the Tehsildar that Pir Tor was the most lecherous man they had ever known in that village. If the Tehsildar were to speak to this renegade, he was likely to get frightened and either leave the place or mend his ways.

The Tehsildar had some years ago served in the Dera Razi District, where he knew of a tribal chief, grey-bearded and old, who had complained to the District Officer against a rising young chief. This was his rival. He had been educated in a modern college, wore English trousers, wore his hair short and shaved himself. The main cause of the complaint was not that the young chief was dishonest, corrupt, cruel or unjust to the people over whom he ruled,



but that he had a bath every day. The English officer knew the significance of this complaint for, according to Moslem ideas, a man who has been to bed with a woman must have a bath in the morning, otherwise he remained unclean and was bound to have bad luck. This old chief by suggesting that his young rival had a bath every day was trying to convey to the District Officer that the young chief was a bad character. Actually he was a man of excellent principles. He had been brought up in a modern way and was therefore accustomed to having a bath every morning. This, being an unusual occurrence amongst the tribesmen, provided the old rogue with some sort of a cause for backbiting and complaint.

The Tehsildar immediately understood the significance of the *mulla's* complaint that the man had a bath every day. No wonder that the wives of serving soldiers and young widows were averse to having baths, particularly those whose mothers-in-law were alive. This was the way in which suspicions and rumours spread in the village. Whenever a man or a woman was seen bathing, people would begin to talk. While these things were going through

the mind of the Tehsildar, he turned round to the *mulla* and told him to remind him of this in the morning.

Just when they were all standing ready to move off to receive the Settlement Officer, the *mulla* appeared on the scene and the Tehsildar recollected the meeting which had taken place the previous night between the two of them. The Tehsildar was well aware that he himself had two wives and that, particularly in view of his seven children people in their heart of hearts looked down upon him. But they knew that men in power do not like to hear the bitter truth about themselves, and thus everyone held their peace. "The sensitive temperament of rulers cannot bear the heat of criticism" was a universally understood old Persian saying. In spite of the fact that his religion allowed him a second wife, the Tehsildar had a constant inferiority complex. He could always guess people's feelings and well realise in advance what they were likely to say if the talk turned on problems of family life. Yet it was this inferiority complex which egged him on to act, for he could under cover of giving Pir Tor a talking-to, make a dissertation to the ignorant and illiterate

villagers on marriage problems, and so covertly show off that his own second alliance was the best thing that could have happened to him or might happen to any man in similar circumstances. He well knew that on sex matters the Western people had quite a different outlook from that of the orientals. In Europe if a man slept with an unmarried woman it was no offence. In Islam, on the other hand, if a married man did so he would be stoned to death. But the Islamic law demanded very strict proof; at least two eye-witnesses were essential and some commentators had expounded the law so as to mean that being in bed together was not sufficient proof of the illegal act, and that unless the witnesses could say that they tried to pass a thread between the two and it did not pass, the unlawful offence for which death was the penalty stood unproved. In Europe if a man took a second wife while the first was living he went to gaol; under Islam he could have up to four wives. Islam contemplated a second wife in cases where men were likely to keep mistresses and produce illegitimate children with no social position and no right of inheritance. Islam allowed marriages

in such cases. In Islam a man could only have two wives if he treated them equally. Such was the injunction of the Qoran. If he bought a shirt for one he must do so for the other. If he had his meal in the evening with one, he must have his next meal with the other. If he spent one night in the room of one, he must spend the next in the room of the other wife, no matter how much older or uglier. A man could not desert the older wife and spend all his time with the younger one. The Qoran allowed plurality of wives only if a man could treat them equally. If this equal treatment did not exist, a Moslem woman was able to sue for damages or declaration of dissolution of the second marriage.

The Tehsildar was fully aware of the pros and cons of a second marriage and was convinced in his own mind that he had done the right thing. Yet he had a guilty feeling all the same, and this often made him do things which saner people would have refrained from doing. He naturally took interest in the Pir Tor case, for it gave him a chance to show off his superiority of conduct. On the other hand he also felt that by wanting to show off his superiority he might give cause to some

people to think that he was not really superior, otherwise there would have been no need for him to try and show off. He remembered the day when six of his bearded former class-fellows had dined together, and after dinner when they were all in a hilarious mood, one naughty old boy had challenged all to raise their hands if they had not committed any sin. One man had raised his hand, not because he had not committed any sin but because he thought it was an excellent opportunity for him to break the news which he had till then kept secret, that in order to escape sin, he had married a second wife. It was a well-known custom that men with more than one wife never lost a chance rightly or wrongly of attacking the character of their best friends who had only one wife. Their one effort was to show that men could only remain moral if they had more than one wife like themselves.

The Tehsildar had been given by the *mulla* a chance to defend his own action in the public eye. He did not want the villagers to know that he was not all-powerful and able to achieve everything under the sun.

Pir Tor was sent for, and when he arrived, there was an exchange of very hot words

between him and the Tehsildar. The latter worked himself up into a fury and asked Pir Tor how he earned his living. Pir Tor replied that he had saved up enough money abroad and that he was living on his lawful earnings. The Tehsildar asked the people if they knew whether Pir Tor had any lawful occupation, and they all said 'no'. As magistrate, the Tehsildar could arrest any person who had no obvious means of livelihood, but he knew that he would find it difficult to arrest a man who was not a vagabond and who owned a house in the village. Moreover, every convicted person had the right to appeal to higher authority. The Tehsildar then asked the villagers if there were any who felt themselves in danger from this particular man. His neighbour was the first to volunteer information and alleged that he was constantly living in danger of being assaulted by Pir Tor. A few of his partisans supported him in this and said that they also were in danger of physical injury from Pir Tor. The Tehsildar thereafter proceeded to try him on the spot under the Indian Criminal Procedure Code, alleging that there was imminent danger of breach of the peace. Under the law he was entitled to call upon this man to give surety

of good behaviour for one year, and if he failed to do so he could be sent to gaol for one year. As Pir Tor had no supporters or friends in the village, he was unable to procure the necessary sureties and consequently on being convicted of being a cause of endangering the lives of others, he went to gaol for one year. The Tehsildar's reputation spread far and wide as being a very just and righteous man. Although there was no truth in the allegations made against Pir Tor that he was a danger to the peace of his neighbour, yet he had made himself so thoroughly unpopular that nobody regretted his disappearance from the village.

After this summary dispensation of justice, the whole body of country dignitaries, supplemented by whatever subordinate officials there were about, moved off to meet the great white Sahib, the Settlement Officer, who was coming on horseback from the neighbouring *zail*. At the boundary of the two *zails*, the crowd following the Settlement Officer stopped and the fresh flock took their places. There were many on foot and about fifty or so on horseback. Every man of any importance living in this *zail* was there to welcome the Sahib.

They all went not because the Sahib knew any of them or was likely to remember there-after that, So-and-So had done him the honour of following him in the procession and had enjoyed the exclusive privilege of swallowing the dust en route, but because, if he did not go, the villagers would think that he was a nonentity and not grand enough to be invited to share the honour of following the Sahib into the village. There were some who went to oblige the Tehsildar and the local Zaildar, who felt it their duty to put up a good show by having as large a crowd as possible so as not to be outdone by their neighbours in this form of hospitality and courtesy. They also feared, no doubt falsely in this particular case, that the white officer might think that the Tehsildar had not taken sufficient trouble to collect the proper number of men to form a suitable escort. The Zaildar and the headman had been busy all the morning waking up everyone whom they considered of any consequence and whom they had previously warned of the coming occasion. They were all supposed to put on their very best clothes, and if necessary to borrow ponies from their neighbours. Even the village cattle-lifter was allowed to follow



on a stolen horse, for no other reason than that the Tehsildar did not want the best looking horse in the village to be missing from the procession. The Tehsildar had promised the thief that he would persuade the Sub-Inspector of Police, who was bound to be there, to close his eyes for this occasion. The only person of note who refused to go with this procession was Ali. His father was very proud of his good-looking and educated son. Ali was one of the best horsemen in the District. He had twice won the annual tent-pegging competition at the Sargodha Horse Show. He owned two fine three-quarter thoroughbred mares, and possessed, in addition to an English saddle—two beautiful locally made saddles with a certain amount of silver trappings which his future father-in-law had presented to him. His father was very keen that Ali should ride in this procession and that every one should see him, but Ali non-cooperated and absolutely refused to go. He had a conscientious objection to following people he did not know and who took little interest in him.

The motley crowd met the Sahib. They all bent low. Even the horsemen had dismounted, bent on their knees and then stretched upwards

to straighten out their cramped muscles and let down their loin cloths, the centre of which they had gathered and pulled through their legs and tied into a knot at the front to prevent it from being blown away when they rode their horses. This was certainly a very ingenious way of turning a loin cloth into a pair of trousers, and there were many who rode with their knees so tight on the saddle that the loin cloth did not slip out.

All bent low and saluted Moghul fashion. In their left hands they held whips made of little twigs of trees, as also the reins of their horses. With the right hands they saluted, for it was rude to salute with the left. There was Mr. Lincoln, the Settlement Officer, wearing a big Khaki sola hat and riding a grey horse, three-quarter thoroughbred, his own property, as was also the chestnut mare on which rode his wife Dorothy. His little daughter Marjorie—eight years old—was in a palanquin carried by four men. There were another four in reserve. The palanquin had a cloth shade over it in order to protect Marjorie against the danger of sunstroke.

Dorothy liked following her husband in his tours. She had been to this particular village on many occasions before and she knew most of

the women, for she had talked to them for long hours in their own language. Dorothy not only liked the open-air life herself, but she wanted to keep her husband company, for in those days there were not quite so many metalled roads, nor were there so many motor cars. It would certainly have made her mouth water to realise that her sisters a few years later were likely to stay permanently at the district headquarters and that their men-folk, no matter how distant the village they had to visit, could always count on getting back to headquarters in the evening for their bridge and dance at the club. Dorothy did not mind roughing it in tents, particularly when she realised that there were not many white women in the district headquarters to keep her company; it was not only unusual for a white woman to mix with Indian women, but the few Indian women there were had nothing in common with her. These were mostly illiterate. They were generally wives or sisters of people serving under her husband or of people who were wanting favours from her husband. Consequently she found it convenient to keep away from them. She also felt that it was her duty to help her husband to discharge the sacred task which she thought

God had allotted to him. She never for a moment allowed the idea to enter her mind that it was dangerous to leave a man, white or black, alone in a hot country. Lincoln and Dorothy had loved each other truly and could have been kept apart for years and yet they would not have betrayed each other. They would have waited with all the zest and keenness of separated lovers. The sacredness of true love was well preserved in their two hearts. They were well matched. They were both educated at Oxford, and both were the children of clergymen. Their little daughter was growing up and should have been at an English school. There were schools for Europeans in India but there was a danger of her picking up chichi English and some habits of the class which would have provided her playmates. They always felt that Marjorie should go to school in England, for an English education was essential if she was to marry in accordance with her status. The Sahib class would never marry a white woman who was brought up and educated entirely in India. Dorothy had feared the day when she would have to part with her daughter, like hundreds of other Englishwomen who lived in India and who were always torn between India and

England, between their husbands in India and their children at home. Their salary, they knew, would be spent mainly in paying Dorothy's passages to and from England. She was quite prepared to face this peripatetic existence until her husband retired on his £1,000 a year pension, but she also realised that by then they would both have reached an age when opportunities for enjoyment in Europe could not hold out to them the same lure as would have been the case had they retired earlier.

Dorothy was resigned to her fate and happy in the company of the man she was proud to be with. He was handsome and young, about 45. He was clever, for he got into the service through competition and not with the aid of any nepotism. His career was based on merit and not on favouritism, nor gained through petticoat influence. Sometimes she felt like going back to England, living there in a cottage and putting her girl in a school. It would have been great to be near her. But she could not leave her husband, and therefore she was destined to suffer pangs of separation either from the child or from her man. She recalled to her mind the case of the wife of a Sessions Judge who had lived next door to her in another

District a few years earlier. His son, eight years old, was at a public school in England and while playing rugger had broken his thigh. The doctors had performed an operation and put a silver band round the broken thigh-bone, but it had not set properly. They had to operate again, cut the skin and break and re-set the bone. The mother was in touch with all that was happening in England. She was eating her heart out. It was no use. She could not get to England. She suffered from nightmares. She often saw her little son in dreams lying by himself in his hospital ward, and no one to comfort or console him in his pain. She saw him there crying for his Mummy and Daddy all the time. In her dreams she also saw him being carried to the operating theatre for the second time. He was refusing to take the chloroform, and was shouting "Mummy, Mummy." Dorothy knew that such was the lot of some of the white women who were serving in India. The Sessions Judge's wife, went into paroxysms of pain and mental torture when she thought of her child suffering all alone. Yet there was no help for it. This was the price that all women belonging to a great race had to pay for upholding the traditions of their people. The burden of

serving as props and pillars of an imperial edifice had fallen on their shoulders, an edifice which had been built with great sacrifices, a heritage on which mainly depended the prosperity and glory of their country.

Dorothy was wearing a big straw hat, a scarf tied round it with its ends hanging down to protect her neck and spine against the sun. The hat was lined with red silk and she had a piece of red baize hanging down from her neck along the spine to give it additional protection.

James Lincoln was one of eight children brought up at a vicarage in the Midlands. He had won a scholarship on passing out of a grammar school. This was worth £150 a year and his father had allowed him another £50. With this he just scraped through the three years at Oxford before he got into the Indian Civil Service. He had about twenty years' service to his credit. For his thoroughness in submitting well-considered and well-drafted reports to his superiors with as little delay as possible he had secured promotion to selection grades and plum jobs in the Province. The culminating point of these special lifts arrived when he was selected as Settlement Officer for the District of Shahpur, with headquarters at Sargodha. It was

an opportunity afforded to few in the Service, and if he were to acquit himself well during the two years that he was expected to be engaged in carrying out the re-assessment of the District, the highest jobs in the Province would come within his reach. The task that he was called upon to discharge was not a light one. He was expected to tour twenty days in the month and stop out in the villages most of these days. But the arduousness of the task had at the end of it the prospect of a very generous reward. If successful, he was to be one of the few selected officers in the District marked out for promotion to become Commissioners in the five divisions of the Province. He knew that it was a rule of this service that the higher a man went the harder he had to work. One of the disabilities suffered by its members was the rapid promotion that fell in the way of selected men. On promotion they had to sweat harder and harder and take more and more life out of themselves. The lure of office prevented them from taking their well-deserved leave which was always due to them. James Lincoln was one of these men who slaved *ad infinitum*. He had gone into the Indian Civil Service principally because it was the best-paid service in the world



and it guaranteed him a comfortable pension when life's work was done. It also gave him the chance of a career, because the work was bound to be interesting. He knew that he would be able to lead an open-air life with a little shooting thrown in. But as he continued to live in the country and studied the people and their mode of living, a feeling began to creep over him that he was becoming more and more a slave of the spirit which prevailed all around him. The fear of God permeated the whole atmosphere and he could not remain immune to it. He began to take an interest in his work which was beyond the apparent object of mere pecuniary gain. He was honest beyond compare. He always kept two inkpots on his table; one of these contained ink which belonged to the Sircar and which he used in his official work, the other contained ink which he bought himself and which he used for his private letters. He was also extremely industrious. He worked with a tenacity and zeal which would have put to shame any dividend-earning industrialist in Chicago. He behaved as if the whole edifice of the Indian administrative machinery were likely to crash with dire consequences to the economic life of his own race if he did not work twenty-four hours

a day. He was very happy to play the martyr and the hero. It did not take him long to persuade himself into the belief that he was serving the poor and illiterate Indians who needed uplift and guidance.

As Mr. Lincoln and his family arrived he saw the group of men led by the Tehsildar waiting to receive him. He raised his riding cane which he carried in his right hand in acknowledgement of the salutes of those who had come to welcome him. His face was as serious as that of any judge of a High Court Bench in London. He could not afford to be familiar with the people. It was an unbroken rule that if he was to be respected he must keep up a serious appearance, which was essential if an officer wanted to be feared. Unless an officer was feared the public were not likely to pay the same heed to his commands as was requisite for the proper discharge of his official responsibilities. It had been well drilled into his ears by superior officers at the beginning of his career that familiarity bred contempt. Consequently, he just said : " How are you, Tehsildar ?" and went on without stopping his horse. He spoke not a word to any of the other people standing there. While moving among the crowd he noticed the Zaildar. To

him he turned round and said : " Salaam Zaildar." With a show of these courtesies he continued his march in the well-recognised dignified manner.

The whole crowd of people moved along the dusty, unmetalled road towards Jamalpur, Khadim's village. There were in this procession men with henna-dyed beards, nicely washed and greased for the occasion. Several wives had been busy the previous day washing the clothes of their men-folk who were to have the honour of receiving the Sahib at the *Zail* boundary. They had washed their turbans beautifully, starched them so well that the ends stood up in the air as if wanting to kiss the sky. There were a few entire ponies in the procession and these continued to make unseemly and unpleasant noises all along the route. But apart from this the whole procession walked quietly in funeral gloom. No one was to talk unless he was spoken to by the Sahib and everyone was to do as he was told. These were the two well-understood maxims impressed on all who came in close proximity to any Sahib.

When they reached the outskirts of Jamalpur village a few rags hung up on strings for about twenty yards on both sides of the road

appeared to be serving as flags. There was a three-piece wooden entrance gate covered with banana leaves. It had been hauled out from the headman's white ant-stricken godown on dozens of similar occasions before. The villagers had failed to find the proverbial red cloth with "Welcome" inscribed on it in gold paper, but they all very much hoped that the Sahib would not mind this failing on their part. It was due to no fault of theirs. The local primary school boys had been standing since the time the procession had left the village in the morning. They had been there from eight o'clock to one. The Sahib was due in the village for lunch. The boys had been standing there in the sun bare-headed. It was lucky that Nature had, by their constant exposure, provided them with thick skulls and none of them suffered from sunstroke. But all the same, Lincoln and Dorothy were both shocked to realise that the boys had been made to wait for them and for such a long time. They felt that they had been the cause of this trouble to the children and felt guilty and humiliated in their own consciences. Their only consolation was that their responsibility was indirect. Lincoln had tried to stop this sort of thing in other places, but the servile

inspectors of schools would not hear of it. They always argued that the prestige of the Sircar must continue to be enthroned in the public mind from early childhood. The whole fabric of administration depended on the prestige of kings and rulers, and once this prestige were gone administration would become impossible.

Khadim had arranged with the village washerman, who was the fireworks expert, to let off some rockets, even though it was daytime. As the company reached the camp in the village there they saw six menials, belonging to the minstrel class. They wore red jackets—second-hand uniforms of British Tommies bought at 6*d.* a piece at a cantonment auction—and were carrying brass band instruments borrowed from their counterparts in a village five miles away. There was one set of instruments shared by both these troupes. They marched at the head of the procession for about a hundred yards, and as they walked ahead of him Mr. Lincoln realised what it was to swallow dust. He alighted outside his tent. His syces caught hold of their horses. He slapped his leather boots with his cane, and after a cursory glance over the dust-covered

faces of the people, he said "salaam" to the ghostly apparitions that stood staring at him. He lifted the chick of his tent and went in.

The whole atmosphere had been friendly and cordial. The villager was not concerned with higher politics and he looked upon the Sahib as a friend who lived and behaved like a gentleman, who was honest and dispensed justice fairly and treated all without ill-will or favour. The country folk got as much fun out of occasions such as these as they did out of the happiest village weddings or other festivities like country fairs. A Sahib's visit was always welcome, for it put life into an otherwise dull and dead country existence. Such visits often synchronised with local sporting competitions, and villagers were never more happy than when they heard the tent-pegging or Pirkaudi drum beat.

Lincoln had acquired a snow-white head rather prematurely. He was a man of temperate habits, took plenty of exercise, and was abstemious in food and drink. Yet it was a puzzle why he had gone grey. May be it was the dreaded dysentery which he once caught that gave him his white hair. The Indians seldom suffered or died from this disease,

mainly because they ate so many chillies with their food that their intestines were burned out and made immune to dysentery, enteric and other diseases which the Europeans feared so much. It was easier for dysentery to ruin a European's health than it was for a knife to go through a carrot : so the Indians said. Lincoln had on occasions had a little malaria. But this was mainly as a result of his own claustrophobia, for, in spite of Dorothy's entreaties and doctor's injunctions, he could never be persuaded to allow a mosquito-net to be hung over his bed. He did not mind a few malarial germs in his blood. He had a feeling, supported by medical opinion, that these germs were useful anti-bodies against syphilis germs, not that he ever feared the contagion but because he was one of those who always believed in being on the safe side. He was a man of good character and there was no fear of such things, but he had heard that one white man had contracted this disease from one of the servants who came from the low hills round about Simla, where a mongrel population of Eurasians and others lived during the summer. But in spite of all this there was no apparent reason why he should have gone grey.

He was a happily-married man and had no financial worries. Nobody had yet solved the riddle why so many Europeans went bald or grey in the East. Some had felt that it was perhaps the constant effort to keep up European prestige which was responsible for the brass heads that existed in India. Such was the case perhaps not because worry had made them so, but because it was a generally recognised thing in the East that the white man must never do things which the Indians did and he must always do things which the Indians did not do. If he were to do the same things as the Indians, there would be no difference between the two and then there would be no reason for him to be the top dog in the East. He must constantly endeavour to behave in a manner which made him look a strange creature and perhaps a demi-god to the Oriental. If the white and the brown were to behave alike, the latter might think that they were as good as the white people. Even if the smoke which emerged from the water-bowl of a *huqa* (hubble-bubble) were cooler than the smoke of a cigarette, yet the white man must never touch a *huqa* because it was Indian by origin. He must smoke his black Burma cheroot or a cigar or his English



pipe, even though the latter stank in his pockets. If the Indians drank milk and water or diluted curds or whey, or syrup of cooling herbs and fruits, the white man must burn his inside with alcohol and spirits, with beer and whisky, even though it were 118 in the shade. If the Indian cooked his food in clarified butter, the white man must continue to cook his food in imported lard and fats. If the Indian went about in the summer with the feet bare or just in slippers, the Sahib must wear his socks and laced shoes, even though in the bargain the web of his toes were to rot and smell like dead rats, when he got into his wife's bed at night. If the Indian wore a loin cloth the Sahib must wear his tight trousers or his khaki shorts which in the case of some old colonels had often been noticed to be dangerously high. They could always be seen in these, sitting on wooden benches, drinking gin and ginger after strenuous games of golf throughout the hot weather. These shorts could be tolerated during the summer since the women had all moved to the hills. Even if the Indian food, well cooked in the Indian way was available, the white Sahib must always persuade good Indian cooks to serve as bad English cooks. If the Indians ate

locally-made jam of roses, the Sahib must swallow a Beecham's pill imported from England. The Sahib must never do what the Indian did, no matter how much he suffered in the process. He was expected to keep up the prestige of his class. It was a question whether Lincoln, like most Europeans, had, owing to the unnatural life he led in these respects, earned his grey hair. Be the reason what it may he was grey, but it mattered little, for he had a young face and was full of beans. He loved the Indians but, like his wife, he always felt that the Indians had nothing which was worth adopting and that the superiority of his own culture, customs and modes of living had been long established by the white man's superiority in gunpowder and breech-loading guns. The old adage, 'when in Rome do as Rome does' only applied to Indians who went to Europe and not to Europeans who went to India. Whatever the Indians had evolved after their experiences of thousands of years the white men considered themselves exempt from, under the sanctions of a benevolent white providence.

Lincoln might be described as a good, conscientious and honest slave of his traditions. He was a true friend of the farmers

and took a real interest in their welfare and happiness. He lost no opportunity of pressing on them the desirability of giving up waste of money on marriage parties and funerals. He and his colleagues had set up a network of co-operative credit societies for the farmers, and some of these were so successful that they were able to lend money to their members without interest. The moneylenders were made a little unhappy but that could not be helped. A system of agricultural demonstration farms and seed farms had also been established throughout the Province, and pedigree bulls, bred at a Government farm, were supplied free to each village in the Punjab. The farmer, though illiterate, was being helped to get as much out of the land as any farmer anywhere in the world.

This village of Jamalpur consisted of about two thousand souls. These were farmers who owned land and cultivated it. There were crop-sharing tenants who could be deprived of their holdings on six month's notice. It contained about half a dozen shops all owned by Hindus. The rest of the village population consisted of Mussulmans. The Qoran forbade usury and taking of interest, though payment of interest was not forbidden ; consequently Muslims owned

no banks, nor did they do any moneylending in the villages. All shopkeepers in Jamalpur, in addition to moneylending, sold things which the farmers needed, such as clothes, corn, cereals, oils, matches, salt and pepper. These were either stocked in boxes or in empty kerosene tins, the poorer shopkeepers having locally made earthenware containers. Farmers' wives did all the shopping, and seldom was payment made in cash. Goods were either borrowed or paid for in corn or cotton. There were a large number of menials, shoe-makers, carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, bakers, and potters. The blacksmith was needed every day for sharpening the iron ploughshares. The farmers worked the bellows to keep the charcoal fire hot, and they also gave the hammer blows while the blacksmith held the red hot ploughshare with a pair of pincers. The one question he discussed with the farmers every day was whether the pincers were made first or the hammer. Several generations had not succeeded in answering that question.

No farmer ever sold milk, it was considered a disgrace. It was a saying current among them that no honourable farmer in the world ever sold milk or a son. There were two houses of

gardeners. This was a special caste called Malees. Their hereditary profession was gardening, and this caste supplied the gardeners for all the bungalows in towns. These men knew the rudimentary principles of grafting of fruit trees and vegetable growing. The two Malees in Jamalpur grew vegetables and their women sold them, not in shops, but in the streets. They put their carrots, radishes, turnips, brinjals, pumpkins, cucumbers, spinage, onions and chillies in large baskets and squatted at street corners till their baskets were empty of vegetables but full of corn. The farmers thought it below their dignity to grow vegetables. But the truth was that they did not wish to take the trouble of doing the extra ploughing, hoeing, and manuring which all vegetables needed, nor did they possess the intricate knowledge which this profession demanded. They contented themselves by making curries out of turnip-tops, gram plant tops, small raw water-melons and cereals. These combined with butter, milk or whey and wheat-bread gave them all the vitamins they required. One village shopkeeper was a chemist who stocked indigenous drugs, including arsenic. These were often bought to kill dogs or to make aphrodisiacs and occasionally to kill off

troublesome husbands. The law had provided no licensing system for these chemists. When the chemist ran short of real drugs, he often boiled up the leaves of local trees and kept his medicine jars full. He even had a lotion for curing bubonic plague.

The houses were all made of mud. The streets were narrow and dusty. The Hindu shopkeepers sat out in the streets in front of their shops and on their bedsteads. They could be seen swallowing the dust raised by the outgoing and incoming cattle. They always smoked their *hugas*, the grey hair about the mouth of the older ones was always yellow from nicotine.

The land in close proximity to the village was the most valuable, for it received the manure from human excreta morning and evening. The drinking water came from percolation wells which were all outside the village. The womenfolk could be seen in large numbers washing their clothes. The beating of the clothes with cudgels on wooden boards could be heard at long distances. It was remarkable how dirt could be driven out in that manner without the aid of soap. The process kept the village weavers busy all the year round, The headman Khadim owned a small orchard of ten

acres. There were mango trees, Malta and loose skin oranges, date palms, pomegranates, and plums.

The nearest market town was Bhalwal, which was eleven miles away. It was also a railway station and was only nineteen miles by train from Sargodha, the District headquarters. There was a district board (county council) unmetalled road a hundred feet wide connecting Jamalpur with Bhalwal and Sargodha.

In the evening Lincoln rested in his tent, read his letters and decided to go to bed early. But while they were having their coffee Mrs. Lincoln told him that she forgot to relate to him a very pleasant surprise she had experienced before they left the headquarters. She had never before received any Indian women visitors, but on this particular day two Indian ladies came to see her at her house. This was an unheard-of thing. They were the wives of the Tehsildar and the Assistant Tehsildar, both subordinates of Mr. Lincoln. They had gone to pay their respects to Mrs. Lincoln.

"Tell me all about it," said James.

"They came quite unexpectedly. It is a good sign of the changing times. These women are getting a little educated and I suppose are

beginning to open their eyes and want to know things. They left their slippers outside my drawing-room and in spite of my persistent request that they should sit on chairs they insisted on squatting on the carpet, for they said that in my presence it was not right for them to sit up high. Jim, sometimes, I have a very guilty conscience. How good these people are, how respectful to us foreigners who rule in their country and eat of their salt, and can you say that all of us deserve all we receive or meet with? There is no bitterness in their hearts. They can be pleased over very small matters, like children—at least the older generation—and they appreciate every little consideration shown to them. The smallest courtesies on our part make them happy. I cannot imagine how any white man or woman could have had the heart to behave towards these loveable creatures as I am told has been the case in several instances in the past.”

“ Well, tell me, what did these two friends of yours want ? ”

“ They wanted nothing of me, and they just came to see me because their husbands were serving under you. I wonder how many women in our country would show similar



respect to the wives of the men their husbands served under ?”

“What did they say ?”

“They just stared at everything in my drawing-room as if they had seen nothing in their lives before. There is no doubt that this was the first drawing-room of an Englishwoman they had ever seen. As they cast their longing eyes all round I read a desire in their admiring faces to possess what I possessed, and why not ? Why should they not have a beautiful home as I have. If they had the money I am sure they would. All this talk of low standards of living is humbug. Who does not want to have more money ? Who would not raise their standard of living if they had the wherewithal to do so ?”

“Do you think they would have the sense to have beautiful things like you ?”

“Of course, they have plenty of sense and they have very good taste. Look at the way these ignorant, illiterate women in the villages dress themselves, even with the little they possess. You should have seen how simply yet how beautifully these two women were dressed. One was about twenty and the other about forty. I should have liked to have worn those clothes

myself. They were both so beautiful. The Hindu lady belonged to Kashmir. She had Roman features and a white creamy coloured skin. She had dark hair and a slim figure, five foot six in height. The Moslem lady belonged to the plains, was bronze coloured and had Aryan features. She was about five foot eight. The former wore a simple light green saree, and the latter loose Persian trousers, a long shirt and a muslin head cover, all beautifully matched in different shades of light brown. They were both beautiful enough to enter for a beauty competition against women of any country in the world. They were built on the light side and had no jewellery on except two or three gold rings each. They do not observe our custom of wearing wedding-rings."

"I wonder if on the whole it is wise to let them come into your home or to let them into our clubs. It makes them discontented. Moreover, their close association disperses the charm and the awe that always attaches to things not known or seen from a distance."

"That might have been the case years ago, Jim, but now that they are becoming masters of their house and political power is passing into their own hands, it is very necessary that we

should create greater opportunities of mixing with them, else we shall be left in the cold. They are starting their own clubs from which, following our example they are excluding Europeans. It is all wrong."

"Well, how long did they stay?"

"Quite a considerable time. They seemed to be very good friends of each other, even though one was a Moslem and the other a Hindu. They chirped like magpies all the time they were there and I let them have full scope. They fired at me volley after volley of questions regarding the number of my children and income of relations; you know, as is the custom amongst the women of this country. When they had finished examination of the living generation of both of our families, they got on to the topic of the women of England and their freedom. They lifted their right hands and placing the thumbs on their chins and the forefingers on their upper lips, they simultaneously said "Sister, listen, have you ever heard such things?" I well realise their search for something different from what they experience at the moment, but I do hope that in their endeavours for advancement and their desire to follow in the footsteps of the white people they will

not discard what is charming and so beautiful in themselves for something which is so loathsome and ugly in us. They did not know what they wanted, but they were both in search of something new. That seems to be the spirit of the people at the moment. They never said a word against their men-folk and appeared to be very devoted wives. One had no children."

"I wonder which way the mind of Indian womanhood is moving?"

"I do hope they do not become bitter towards all the Europeans. If they do I am afraid we shall not be able to keep our friendly relations with the country for long, because it is the women who are most important. We cannot expect them always to look up to us white people as friendly superiors. It is against human nature not to want to be the mistress in one's own house. Indian women have evidently reached a critical stage in their transitional period of modern awakening. Let us see which way they will turn."

When Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln went to sleep after this short conversation, the headman's work for the day was not yet finished. Before he retired for the night he felt it his duty to make a last call on the head clerk and say good-night.

This privilege of seeing the head clerk in privacy was exclusive to those who were on the most intimate terms with him, such as Khadim. The headman filled the smoking pipe and sat on the bed, where his friend lay flat after having gormandised at the expense of the villagers.

"Does your Sahib sleep well?"

"Oh yes, but why do you ask this question?"

"We were visited not long ago by a white Sahib called Bucknell."

The head clerk burst into laughter and said :

"Go on, let us hear what it is this time."

"He had been in this District, I was told by his servants, for the last ten years. But this was the first occasion when he came to our village. He looked about 50, but his valet told me that the white people higher up had fallen out with him and that was why he continued to occupy a subordinate position, and had been superseded by many people who were junior to him."

"What was he up to in Jamalpur?"

"I don't know what he was up to, but a good many of us could not sleep a wink the night he was here."

"Do tell me."

"He pitched his tent outside the village near the pond from where we dig out mud for building

our houses. It had rained heavily. His servants told us that the people in England make fellows like Bucknell read so many difficult books before they send them out to India that their brains get worn out, with the result that these unfortunate young men cannot sleep well for the rest of their lives. Bucky Sahib had strained his poor little brain, to such an extent that he suffered from chronic insomnia. His head clerk had sent to me, in advance, detailed instructions about what I was to do, and on arrival the first question he asked me was ; 'Is the Sahib's soporific material ready ?' and I said : ' Yes, it is on the bank of the pond adjoining the camp.' That night four menials of the village were on duty, one by one, all night long."

" What did they do ? "

" They sat there throwing stones from a heap into the pond."

" Whatever for ? "

" Each time a poor frog wished to croak in order to relieve itself of the suffocation it felt, all the rest of his fraternity from every corner of the frogged pool would respond instantly in a melodious chorus, which this particular Sahib

resented, for it prevented him from going to sleep."

They both burst into laughter. Their right hands went flying up in the air and came down heartily into an enthusiastic hand-shake, such as is only customary among very intimate friends. As they pressed each other's hands hard one could have noticed their mutually complimentary glances, no less warm than those of two actors who had successfully left behind them an audience in raptures of laughter. Their wonderful performance at a close, they said good-night to each other and the head clerk's parting words were :

"In spite of all his shortcomings, Bucky is not a bad fellow. He is the best friend of the farmer. He sent one cattle thief to jail but kept his wife and children in funds out of his own pocket until the man came out of jail."

Mr. Bucknell was an Englishman from Hampshire. He was good-looking, 5 ft. 8 ins. in height, with a long thin neck and a round head wrongly screwed on. He had good blue eyes, and was gifted with a cheerful disposition. He wore glasses and always looked red in the face. His servants had estimated that during his twenty-eight years of service, in which he

had marked time without advancement, he had swallowed alcohol to the tune of Rs. 100,000. He was easily aroused to ire, and his kleptomania, which his servants at first interpreted as a mean habit of pilfering the match-boxes belonging to his friends, clung to him throughout his service. His somnambulism had gone but his sleeplessness persisted. He was endowed by nature with numerous eccentricities. He was a gentleman belonging to the martial classes of England. In fact, his family had produced during the last three hundred years some of the most brilliant cavalry officers of the British Army. His kinsmen claimed no mean a share in making England as glorious as she was. He was of a very healthy and fertile stock of Britons, many of whom had taken holy orders. These proud descendants of the Angles and Saxons had proved very prolific and the family estates were reduced to such small proportions that they were unable to uphold with dignity an expensive career in the British cavalry regiments. The vast majority of the Bucknell breed had to tap new sources of employment, and Tim Bucknell being definitely of the opinion that a healthy brain like a healthy body could be trained to perform the most



difficult mental acrobatics, had decided to try his luck at an Indian Civil Service competitive examination. He broke away from the beaten track of his progenitors and decided to tread on fresh ground—in spite of the risks involved. The fact that he was successful in the examination confirmed him in his belief more than ever. He pooh-poohed the theory of heredity—such as people tried to prove by the analogy of the Indian Brahmin's brains, which through centuries of a monopoly of learning were generally recognised as the acutest in the world. These pundits having been repositories of all learning generation after generation, were considered to have developed a brain which was recognised to be unmatched not only in cramming for examinations but also in its power to retain facts, though its faculties of perception and research had remained dormant.

Tim Bucknell had had a very chequered career in the Indian Civil Service. He had been first tried in the Executive Branch of that great Service. But he did so many mad things, including the detention of a mail train by standing before the engine for one hour till his luggage arrived, for which prank he was fined Rs. 1,200, that he was shunted off into the

**Judiciary.** As a magistrate he was equally brilliant. Once in the good old days, he insisted that a certain lawyer whom he did not like should argue his case from outside the chick of his tent. On another occasion he fell out with a lawyer over the question of shoes and bare feet. An Indian lawyer dressed in European clothes, which in itself in the eyes of Mr. Bucknell was a heinous offence, for he felt that the subject race should never try to look like the rulers, appeared in court with a pair of locally-made English shoes, complete with laces. Mr. Bucknell thought that the lawyer, having a little education and able to speak English, was trying to show his independence of character by asserting his equality with Europeans in the matter of wearing shoes. He considered his behaviour truculent and his appearing in court with his shoes on an unpardonable sin. The lawyer felt that the white officer was trying to humiliate him in the eyes of his countrymen by insisting that he should remove his shoes before coming into the court. However, the officer refused to let him conduct the case for which he had been engaged unless he left his shoes outside the court. This the lawyer refused to do and walked out. That night he had

a horrible sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach lest he be refused admittance to the court altogether and his business ruined. He knew that it was a dangerous thing for lawyers to fall out with court officers, even if the latter were to blame and that if the news went round that the magistrate and he were at loggerheads with each other, he was likely never to get another case in that magistrate's court. So he argued with himself and tried to calm himself down by suggesting that perhaps it was not the magistrate's fault and that he himself was to blame for being hasty. "Where was the harm in taking my shoes off when I do so in so many other places?" he said to himself. But on the other hand, these were different shoes; these were European shoes and he was perfectly in order in trying to stand on his rights and defend his self-respect. In short, he was inclined to make himself a martyr in order to establish the right of his countrymen to appear in court wearing shoes.

At the same time as this lawyer was turning things over in his mind the magistrate was trying to go to sleep. As a soporific he had picked up an English novel. While his eyes were careering over the lines of the book his

mind was meandering back to what had happened during the day. He recalled a previous occasion in his Court when he had called a certain lawyer—who was conducting a case—a “prostitute,” because lawyers, served anyone who was willing to pay them and even took cases against their best friends. Money was their chief object in life. He also remembered that this lawyer had lodged a suit for defamation against him and he had to eat the humble pie and apologise. His reputation since then did not stand very high either with the public or in official circles. This time he was wondering whether the shoe affair would take a serious turn. He had the assurance that the people higher up were all Europeans and would not want to disgrace a brother European, but he also realised that they might be getting sick of him, that he was constantly getting into trouble and creating difficulties for the administration, and if these incidents occurred repeatedly they might want to get rid of him. He was the only one out of two hundred I.C.S. officers in this Province who was known to be eccentric, and no matter how foolishly he behaved he could never do any real harm to the

administration. He also knew that although the lawyer class hated him, the farmers loved him sincerely for his manifold kindnesses and favours throughout his official career. Many of his difficulties were due to the fact that, owing to his sympathy with the villagers—and these constituted 95 per cent. of the population, he defied laws and regulations and brought upon himself the invective of higher authorities. Once when he was being tried out as a Revenue Officer he remitted the whole year's tax on land within his jurisdiction because the farmers in his opinion were too poor to pay the money. It took the Government six months to clear up the mess after his immediate transfer to another District. But on this particular occasion he thought that perhaps at the time Government would only reprimand him privately in the Chief Secretary's room and nothing would appear in public. But then there was the insulted lawyer to be considered. He might file a suit. Consequently he made up his mind to make up to the lawyer next day. The lawyer himself being in a very reasonable mood, the whole affair was hushed up through the mediation of the head clerk, who was very glad to have an opportunity of putting his

master under an obligation, in the hope that if he himself committed any indiscretion, particularly in matters financial, his boss would be able to close his official eye, or at least wink it.

Once Mr. Bucknell let off a thief because he agreed with the lawyer that it was not possible for a small human being to steal a big thing like a camel. For these and many other noble achievements the Chief Judge of the Lahore High Court at last succeeded in turning him out of the Judiciary and sending him back to the Executive with the remark: "Thy present in thy face I throw."

Ever since, Mr. Bucknell had been put on odd and unimportant jobs, of which he made such a great mess that at long last the Punjab Government were obliged to confine his depredations to the trials of petty offences connected with breaches of traffic and municipal bye-laws. He had once tried to swim the Jhelum River on horseback, for he felt that if Maharaja Ranjit Singh had done it why couldn't he do the same. "Shame on the boatman who rescued him," remarked the Chief secretly when he heard the news. Once he nearly lost all his records when trying to cross a river during a storm. He collected birds' eggs, and he kept a hockey team of his

own. He was unmarried because no woman would contemplate such an irresponsible lunatic. The villagers adored him. Once in an elated mood he kissed a general's daughter at a dance in Simla, for which indiscretion he was adequately rewarded by an invitation to dinner by the girl's brother at Davico's Restaurant, where he and a few other brother officers, after profuse hospitality led Bucky into a boxing duel with the regimental champion. "Let us have it out, let us have it out," were the cries, and old Bucky and his friend took their jackets off. No sooner had Bucky advanced than he found himself on the floor facing the ceiling. A few strokes of the cane on his debagged buttocks proving rather serious, they restored his trousers to him and beat him blue from knees upwards. At first they had thought of sending him home bagless, but his appeal in the name of British prestige restored to him his missing article of clothing, and he staggered home on foot through rows of rickshaw coolies, for he was too sore to sit in a conveyance. His servants thought for several days that he had picked up a venereal disease, but the bazaar rumour which emanated from Davico's had spread like wildfire. The thing for which people

despised him most was that while being beaten with canes he had cried loudly and grunted like a pig. The people thought he could not be a pure-bred Sahib. There was a generally recognised rule among them that if a bull terrier puppy three months old was lifted by its ears and it did not cry it was pure bred. The people also had heard that among the order of Freemasons each candidate for membership was led into a subterranean dungeon in the Magic House, as they called the Freemasons' Hall. He was always stripped naked, made to lie on the ground and caned. If he cried out he was denied membership. In the opinion of the Indian public, old Bucky had failed in this test and lost all claims to the pure breed of the English people. There was an old Baluch chieftain who always argued with British officers about their foolishness in not giving sufficient weight to claims of heredity in selecting rulers of India. He always tried to hold them to ridicule by pointing out that whereas in buying horses, dogs, and even chickens the Englishman always paid great regard to blood, when selecting men for the Indian Civil Service the British allowed everyone, even sons of criminals, to compete. Ever



since he had known old Bucky he had ceased to harp on the great values of blue blood.

Mr. Bucknell lived at Sargodha, so did the Lincolns. As a matter of fact, they lived next door to each other. Sargodha was a town of fifty thousand souls. The white man's Government had laid its foundation stone in 1896. It was a modern town consisting of a city on one side of the railway line and a civil station on the other. In the city lived the people. It was built in square blocks with straight roads and streets. You could stand at one end of a street and see right through the town to the other side. The building sites had been auctioned by Government, as also the shop sites and the grain market, from where the large rat population occasionally started plague epidemics till the municipality by a bye-law compelled merchants to have cement floors. All buildings were made of red brick. In the village there were no brick houses, because the farmers had no money, and the menials and the moneylenders who had some money did not own the land on which stood their mud-houses and shops.

In the civil station lived the officials and well-to-do lawyers, larger landowners, local merchants, foreign grain and cotton merchants,

including two Japanese. Here also lived judicial, administrative, police, canal, army remount, and medical officers. There were a bank, stallion stables, jail, courts, and a lock-up between the civil station and the railway line. The Punjab Government had built houses for Government officers and clerks, and everyone paid ten per cent. of their salary by way of rent. Each bungalow had a two or three acre orchard and garden. The stallions in the stables served mares free of cost. They had been imported from England, for there were four thousand mares in this locality, kept for breeding horses for the Indian Army. Each peasant had been given fifty acres of land free of cost ; he only produced an approved mare and kept it in good condition and gave the Army the first option to purchase the progeny. The prosperity of Sargodha and an agricultural area of about twenty thousand square miles depended on the canal, a hundred feet wide and ten feet deep, which ran through the district. Cotton, wheat and oil seeds were produced in large quantities. There were about half a dozen cotton ginning factories, a few oil mills and half a dozen small flour mills. The drinking water of the town came from the canal. It was filtered in open

tanks and pumped up to a steel reservoir. The sub-soil water was brackish. The prosperous Municipal Committee had imposed a water tax, levied according to the size of the water pipe which led up to each house. Only the richer people, including all the members of the Municipal Committee, had water connections in their houses. The poorer people had to fill their pitchers from street water taps, and paid no tax. There were no direct taxes, and the whole income of the municipality came from octroi duties, which fell equally on the rich and the poor. The drinking water from the overhead steel reservoir was icy cold in the winter and boiling hot in the summer. But there was a prosperous ice factory at Sargodha. There was a park for the public, maintained by the Municipal Committee. The roads were metalled but dusty. There was not a single dairy; people kept their own cows, and these were often tethered in public streets. There were beautiful sisoo trees on the roadside for shade, and there were fruit orchards round each bungalow. The scent of orange blossom in the spring was lovely. As influential people went paying their respects to officers from bungalow to bungalow and

asking for extra shares of canal water or making recommendations to magistrates for the release of cattle thieves or rioters, they had the delightful scent to compensate them for the fine road dust they swallowed. In this civil station, close to the railway line, lived the Tehsildar and his assistant in two adjoining houses built in the Indian style and owned by the Punjab Government. There was just a little verandah which served as the sitting-room for the men and there were four other rooms, where the women lived. The kitchen and lavatory were away from the house in two opposite corners of the courtyard at the back. On the roof there was a little shelter where they stored their bedding in the daytime. There was a tree in the compound of each house, and under these sat and worked the wives of the Tehsildar and his assistant.

Having said good-night to the head clerk, Khadim went home. When these great things were taking place in Jamalpur, the atmosphere at Sargodha was calm and peaceful. The Tehsildar was out touring ; so his younger wife, Gulshan, called on her next-door neighbour at Sargodha, the wife of the Assistant Tehsildar, who was also crop-inspecting and checking revenue

records prepared by the village record-keepers, the *patwaris*. The Assistant Tehsildar had gone ahead of the Tehsildar to the village Jamalpur, where the settlement was to be made. As is the custom in Government departments, the top-dog always depends on the under-dog to do the donkey work for him. The Settlement Officer depended on the Tehsildar to prepare all the papers for him, the Tehsildar depended on his assistant, and the assistant depended on the village record-keeper. One might as well say that the whole fabric of the administration depended on the village *patwari*.

While the Tehsildar was a Muslim, his assistant was a Hindu. This was mere coincidence although people usually thought that the great Sircar had some ulterior motive in putting together two officers of different religions. The usual suspicion was that the Sircar wanted to prevent collusion between officers, and thus men belonging to different creeds were selected so that the possibility of their combining together should be remote.

While the Tehsildar's wife had left school after passing Matriculation, his assistant's wife had read up to the B. A. examination, but was deprived of appearing in the final examination

and taking her degree—which she fully deserved—by her marriage which had been arranged by her parents. The date, which in accordance with Brahmanic advice, was the only onesuitable to the husband, had been fixed without any regard for the examination. Her parents thought it would be a mistake to jeopardise the chances of their daughter's marriage with a Government officer. After all, what was the use of her taking an examination if she was to be married? She was not going to teach as a professor in any college, and therefore the actual degree was of little consequence. So far as education was concerned, she had already acquired more than enough for the discharge of her duties as a faithful wife and mother.

Gulshan Ara after her morning meal strolled over to the house of her neighbour, Chandra Vati, the wife of her husband's assistant. Chandra was seated on a low stool, under the cool shade of a sarus tree making cotton yarn on a hand-driven spinning-wheel.

Both the women wore light cotton chintz cloth shirt and trousers in the case of Gulshan and a saree in the case of Chandra. The latter had covered her head with her saree, but Gulshan wore a muslin *utla* (head cover). No

woman except a prostitute was ever known in India to uncover her head before any male person, other than the husband.

During the course of their conversation, Gulshan opened her heart to her friend and poured out all the pent-up fury of disappointment and disillusionment of her married life. She said that she hated the religion which allowed a plurality of wives and was disgusted with her parents, who had thought of themselves and the gains and advantages of the family and cared nothing for her best interests when bestowing her hand on the decrepit old Tehsildar, whose very sight she hated from the depths of her bowels.

Chandra was a well-read girl and had made a comparative study of the social position of women under various religions and civil laws. She turned round to Gulshan and told her that all men were alike in their ugliness and selfishness no matter what their religion. While under the Muslim religion a man was restricted to four wives, under the Hindu religion he could marry even a hundred. While the Muslim law allowed divorce, the Hindu law did not allow it in any circumstances. Once a Hindu woman was married she was finished for life so long as her

husband lived. Even after widowhood few Hindu women ever remarried. The strict injunctions of their religion were against widow remarriage, and even if some of the modern people were trying to go outside those injunctions, the natural prejudice against widow remarriage based on thousands of years of practice, still continued to militate against the women-folk.

Chandra stopped the wheel and with her left hand pulled the spool off the spindle and put the yarn along with the rest of it in the basket nearby. She addressed Gulshan in all seriousness, mainly to cheer her up.

"Do you know anything about Muslim law of marriage and divorce?"

"No."

"Well, I have made a special study of it and I may tell you something for your edification."

"Yes."

"It is not the fault of your law, it is the fault of your men-folk. When the Muslims conquered this beautiful homeland of ours, they brought with them their own laws, but those of us, like your people for instance, who became converted to Islam—whether by conviction or by force or temptation is beside the point—continued to



follow the Indian customary law of inheritance. In Islam, when a man dies his property is divided among all his heirs. The shares of the wife, the mother, the father and the children—sons and daughters—are all fixed by the Qoran. The deceased cannot by will leave to one heir more than his due share under the Qoran. Nor can he will away to charity more than one-third of the total of his assets. It is a great protection for the children of a wife who may fall out with her husband. According to our Hindu law, which is also followed by Muslim converts from Hinduism, a daughter inherits no property at all. We are no worse off than English women were up to 1885, but we are certainly out-of-date today.”

“ Well, I never. I am a Mussulman, yet I did not know these things.”

“ You cannot inherit knowledge, Gulshan, and I am sure that you know as little about your marriage laws as you do about your laws of inheritance.”

“ I know a lot about them. The *mulla* comes and reads the marriage service; the dowry is fixed. In my case the dowry is half prompt and half deferred; that is, I can demand half of it when I like and the other half is payable only after divorce. My dowry was fixed at

Rs. 1,000. My father-in-law insisted on the division of the dowry into two parts, for if it had not been specifically divided in the marriage deed, the whole of it would have become prompt and I could have demanded it from my husband before I went to his room the first night or I could have demanded it at any time thereafter and secured a decree against him. I also remember that at my wedding, sweets were distributed and raisins, and at night the bridegroom's mother put a lot of these raisins in his hot milk which he drank before he went to bed."

"That is all you know about your marriage laws?"

"That is all that matters, isn't it, Chandra?"

"No, here is a lot more which every Muslim woman, and as a matter of fact all women, should know about your marriage laws. Marriage among Muslims is a civil contract and whatever conditions are agreed to at the time of marriage, are binding. For instance, if at the time of marriage it is agreed that the man shall not marry a second wife, he cannot marry again in the lifetime of his first, and if he does his children from the second wife will be illegitimate, and neither they nor their mother would be able to inherit

any of the property ; in short, she would be treated as a mistress pure and simple."

" Well, my father is a mug. Why didn't he insist on this condition when he gave me away in marriage to my husband ?"

" Never mind, Gulshan. You will see your husband into the grave. He is an old man and the question of a third marriage will never arise with him. If he can cope with you, he should thank his stars. You do not know what a handful a young wife can be to an elderly gentleman. There is a Chinese proverb which says that the two worst things for a man are a young wife and a good cook. But I have not finished with you yet. You should know something more about your marriage laws."

" Yes."

" If at the time of the marriage it is laid down as a condition in the contract that the husband shall not have the right to divorce but the woman shall exercise that right, then the husband cannot divorce his wife but the wife can divorce him. In your Muslim law, if there is to be a divorce it takes place quietly in the presence of two witnesses, behind doors, so that no dirty linen is washed in public. It is not necessary to assign any reasons for the divorce, with the

result that no stigma attaches to either of the parties for the rest of their lives. It is just a decision to separate for good. No recriminations are necessary to bring about this result. The divorce takes two months to become complete and irrevocable. Supposing you or your husband pronounce the first divorce on the 1st January, then you have to wait for one full month before you pronounce the second divorce. Meanwhile if you decide to make up your differences and live together, then that preliminary announcement is cancelled. But if those four weeks have not enabled you to come together—even with the advice of your friends—then after the expiry of the first month you pronounce the second divorce. Should there be no reconciliation at all even during the second month, then the final divorce pronounced for the third time on the 1st March would become irrevocable. But allowing this period of two months gives people an opportunity to think and in many cases they make up their differences. Once a separation for life stares a man or a woman in the face, they will think twice before they take the leap. But you must also remember that once the divorce is final the two persons cannot remarry unless the woman has in the meanwhile

married somebody else and been divorced by him. This is a check on easy divorces. The second husband may like her and she may like him, so much that there may not be any second divorce, and the first husband must realise that if he pronounces a divorce he is likely to lose his wife for good. After the divorce is complete and final a woman has to wait three months before she can marry another man.

You must realise that it is not the fault of your law. The fault is with your people, men and women both. They are ignorant and illiterate ; in short, they are anything but Muslims. They claim that they follow the Shariat, the Muslim law, but they really do not."

"What is the use of crying over spilt milk?" sighed Gulshan.

"It is never too late to mend. If your marriage is a civil contract you can reshape that contract at any time. You can make your old boy enter into any conditions now and they will be binding on him."

"Can I, Chandra ? Are you sure ?"

"Of course I am sure."

"Why did I not meet you before marriage?"

"Not my fault."

“Thank you, Chandra. You have put me under a life-long obligation by this talk. I shall think of you with gratitude so long as I live. I shall make my old man jump when he comes home.” Gulshan quietly walked back to her own house.

### CHAPTER III

The day following the arrival of Mr. Lincoln at Jamalpur was his interview day. He had reserved the whole of it for this purpose. Soon after breakfast he moved into the adjoining office tent. Outside sat three red-coated orderlies, the senior being designated Jamedar. The name of Lincoln's Jamedar was Sher Khan. He was the son of a well-to-do farmer and was full of common sense. He had received vernacular education for eight years. He could read the Qoran in the Arabic script, since the script of his own vernacular, Urdu, was the same. He was of a religious trend of mind and read a lot pertaining to saints and the hereafter. He was about 60 years of age, very honest except in the matter of extracting tips, and very loyal to his master, for whom he would have been proud to lay down his life. He was orthodox in his religious observances and possessed a burning faith in the one living God, omnipresent and omniscient.

All those who wished to see the Sahib waited under a tree about fifty yards away. They were

smoking *hugas* and talking in a subdued tone, almost in whispers, so as not to disturb the Sahib in his work. Some of them sat on chairs, others on bedsteads, others stood about ; there were some who had spread their clothes on the ground and squatted on them, while others sat on bare mother earth. The village moneylender, however, sat on a bedstead, and he was trying to mix with the village folk in a jovial spirit. These periodical exuberances of fraternal feelings occurred whenever parochial patriotism got the village folk together on occasions such as this. The seating arrangement of the visitors depended mostly on how well each man had tipped the head-orderly on the previous occasion. The head-orderly had also a great hand in arranging the actual interviews. There were occasions when he had secured an interview in impossible circumstances for a visitor not on the list, by arguing with the Sahib that if he did not see that particular man the whole castle of British administration would fall. On other occasions he had succeeded—by way of a punishment for unpaid tips—in seeing to it that the most important men remained last on the list. He managed things so skilfully that he was never caught out. Humiliation thus inflicted



always bore its fruit on the next interview day. On many occasions the Jamedar had successfully suppressed names of some men altogether and deprived them of interviews. When one of these tried to approach the Sahib directly, the head orderly intervened and impressed upon the Sahib the necessity of not over-working himself or allowing every Tom, Dick and Harry to have a talk with him. On another occasion he had got away with it by telling the Sahib that the man who sought the interview had arrived late, even though actually the poor devil had been waiting there for four hours. But it was quite possible for an Englishman to believe that the man had arrived late, for Mr. Lincoln knew that the village people had no idea of time. The Jamedar always told the Sahib that the disappointed men could come another day; their time was of no consequence. "Money makes the mare go" was a proverb well understood by the Jamedar and by all those who came in contact with him.

The Jamedar Sher Khan and two other orderlies sat on a mat along the tent wall by the door. Sher Khan wore loose persian trousers, a loose cloak over a long shirt and a turban, all white and clean. He had a red cloth waist band from

which hung a dagger with a mother-of-pearl handle. His two assistants were also regally dressed and all three squatted on the ground and answered their master's verbal commands coming from within the office tent. While the Jamedar was doing all the running about, the other two watched Marjorie Baba throw a tennis ball on the roof of the tent. She thought it was great fun catching it as it jumped off the edge of the tent roof on its downward journey.

On this particular day, a list of visitors was drawn up by the Jamedar. The Sahib noticed that some of the most important men were very low down on the list. He put them higher up and sent for them first. The resourceful Jamedar was a match for his master, and politely informed him that the men were not present. On being questioned by the Sahib a little later why they were absent, they told him that they were not quite ready and had asked the Jamedar for a later interview. They told this white lie fully realising that the Jamedar was listening to every word they said to the Sahib. Mr. Lincoln, however, knew that the Jamedar was always up to his old tricks and he had given up all struggle against his devilries and submitted himself to what seemed to be the recognised

custom amongst all officials in India—to be dictated to by their head-orderlies.

The Settlement Officer interviewed the Zaildars, the 'wearers of white clothes', the 'sitters on chairs', and the headmen in accordance with their orders of precedence. He asked them the usual questions about the weather, the crops, irrigation problems, cattle thefts, honesty of local police, canal and revenue officers ; he even asked questions concerning the Tehsildar's honesty. The latter had already arranged with his friends what they were to say to the Sahib about him. The most useful visitor of the day was the moneylender. The Sahib had kept him last purposely, and the homunculus—Mr. Gobind as he was called,—did not mind being the last on the list, for even in this he saw a courtesy and a distinction, for he well realised that the Sahib had paid him the compliment of sending for him last of all, because he must have desired a very long interview with him.

Leaving his slippers outside, Gobind entered the tent bent, low and presented *nazar*. All Indians wore slippers, for lace shoes were unknown in Indian villages, but in accordance with the eastern custom everyone when he went into a mosque or a temple or a carpeted house

was supposed to leave his shoes at the door. On festival days many a shoe-thief did a roaring trade when people were praying unless someone undertook to forego the pleasure of joining the prayers and kept watch over the thousands of shoes outside the places of prayer. Servants in the East left their slippers at the door before entering their master's room. It was not unknown to the Europeans that leaving slippers at the door was a common courtesy which all Indian visitors should observe.

*Nazar* in the Mogul days was what a vassal presented to his liege. If the king went out into the country the *nazar* presented to him was elephants and trays full of gold, jewels and gold cloth, in accordance with the position and wealth of the man offering the *nazar*. The value of the *nazar* diminished along with the rank of the recipient. The English had abolished this *nazar* system and forbidden the taking of presents in any shape or form and had enacted very severe laws against bribery and corruption. But the people wanted to keep up the *nazar* ceremony and a compromise had been arrived at. The *nazar* could be presented and the officer was expected to touch it with his right hand and return it. The moneylender had

presented on a small tray—a clean brass tray used for eating his meals—two pounds of white open-pan-made sugar, a few pieces of crystal sugar, a few seeds, a cardamom and one rupee. He presented this tray, holding it in both his hands, thus signifying the great respect in which he held the Sahib. It was a custom of the village folk that when a man shook hands with somebody whom he respected enormously he always put his friend's hands in both of his own. Similarly they used both hands when receiving a holy book. On the other hand Mr. Lincoln had been told by his father to beware of the man who put his second hand on him while shaking hands, for such a man was sure to want something out of him. Similarly, he was aware that whereas according to English custom a man who looked another in the eyes was supposed to be a straight fellow, yet in India it was considered rude to do so. He was now experienced enough to make allowances for differences in customs and manners; consequently he never felt hurt or insulted when no hurt or insult was meant by his visitors.

The Settlement Officer touched the money-lender's tray with his right hand, realising that it should never be his left. He bade the man

sit down on the chair on the opposite side of the table. Gobind felt very elated, for he was not entitled to a chair, not possessing the title of Kursi Nashin ('sitter on a chair'). Ordinarily he should have stood throughout the interview but the Sahib knew by long experience that these little courtesies often persuaded people to talk freely and intimately, a thing which in other more strict and formal circumstances they were not prone to do.

The moneylender gave a complete and true picture of the economic position of every farmer in the village. He told Mr. Lincoln how much each farmer owed him. He also told him that twice a year when land revenue was paid, each farmer borrowed money from him to pay it, thus signifying the indispensability of the moneylender class to the great Sircar if the latter were to remain solvent. He also told him how men borrowed money for wasting on their marriages, often bigamous, and on funeral parties, and how great a hold he had on all residents of the village, many of whom depended on him for the provision of grain for food and for seed. He said that the invariable practice was that when the grain was gathered on the threshing floor on the final day, he appeared

on the scene and took away all the grain in payment of interest due from the farmers on the loans advanced to them and to their progenitors for the last four or five generations. The result was that the very next day the farmers and the tenants had to go to his shop to buy from him that very grain for their evening meal, at rates of interest varying between fifty and seventy-five per cent. per annum compound. He told him that one of the sayings of a ruler of the Punjab was that the poorer the peasant, the more easy he was to handle, and that whenever the farmers had bellies full of meal they always created mischief; they were liable to kick and bite like a mule, either amongst themselves or against the Sircar, and if they could not fight against either, they were likely to go for the moneylenders.

Before taking his leave, Gobind thanked Mr. Lincoln for the great benefits that the trading and moneylending class had derived from the protection afforded by the British Government. He particularly thanked him for the provision of law courts and the Contract and Evidence Acts which helped the moneylenders enormously in securing their decrees. He quite frankly conceded that India needed a Government which

possessed, like the British, a business head. He tried to establish a brotherhood with the white man through this commercial instinct which was common to both of them and ended up by saying that it was a great honour to be in a position to say that the moneylenders of India were willing to swim or sink with the British commercial houses and that it was good fortune for the village shopkeepers to be so close to the white people in this respect. He quoted a local adage: 'Even if you see the shadow of a great man, you have a claim to greatness,' and exclaimed "Oh, what an honour to be near a living great man. God help the great Sircar."

When Gobind left the tent after further weighty conversation he walked backwards in a most respectful manner, as did the courtiers during the great Mogul days, for he did not want to turn his back on the officer, just as all good Muslims and Sikhs when leaving their mosques or temples walked backwards so as not to turn their backs on their holy books which contained the word of God.

Among other notable visitors was Khadim, the headman. He looked very dignified with his grey beard, tall figure, pure white clothes



and a healthy complexion. He was very respectful in his demeanour and restrained in his conversation. He always talked slowly for he had been trained to believe that once a word came out of one's mouth it must be fulfilled. During the interview he tried to be intimate by making enquiries after the welfare of the Mem Sahib and Marjorie Baba. Such liberties the Sahib allowed to all those whom he liked or found useful. These intimacies were a special instrument employed by the long-headed farmers who wanted to rise on the social ladder and who had by experience learnt that the Englishman was quite pleased to answer these questions. As Mr. Lincoln proved to be as charming as usual, Khadim carefully stepped a little further in his conversation and said a few good and personal things about Mr. Lincoln himself. The Sahib remarked that his visitor was indulging in flattery. Khadim retorted by saying that if God liked nice things said about Himself and enjoined human beings to repeat His praises so many times a day, how could he persuade himself to believe that the Sahib, who was a mere human being, would feel hurt if something pleasant were said about him? He also told him that people

did not like the naked truth, for it was sometimes as bitter as the serpent's venom and as cold as the icy sea ; least of all were kings and rulers and men in power likely to welcome criticism. It was against human nature to stand criticism like a saint. But all human beings liked to hear things which tickled their vanity. Sycophancy, howsoever false, was tolerated, but finding of faults, however justified, was always resented. The Sahib knew that Khadim had come to see him in order to secure a promise of help in favour of his son-in-law who was a candidate for the extra headmanship which had been created in a neighbouring village. But he also knew that in accordance with the usual custom his visitor would never come to the point unless he had successfully wasted at least half an hour of the Settlement Officer's most valuable time. Mr. Lincoln, out of sheer devilry, was determined not to touch on the question uppermost in Khadim's heart, so he turned his conversation on the subject of the welfare of the headman's family and finally enquired how much English his son Ali had learnt. By this question he very much hoped that he would arouse a desire in the headman's

heart to ask for a job for his son and thus stave off the coming request about the headmanship.

“Khadim, what class is your son Ali in now and how much English does he know?”

“I do not know the number of the class he is reading in, Sir, nor can I test his knowledge of the English language, but I know this much, that he has learnt a lot about the English people, for he has been educated in their school at Lahore.”

“What has he learnt, headman?”

“He can now, with the greatest facility and in the exact way of the English people—make water against the trunk of a tree while still standing.”

Mr. Lincoln could not help smiling, although Khadim was puzzled over the cause of this mirth.

“Where is your son now?”

“He is just outside, Sir, and if you would be so kind as to allow him to pay his respects to you I shall consider it a great favour and for ever pray for your long life and prosperity, and may God bless you with seven sons.”

Ali was brought in dressed in European clothes and after saying ‘how do you do’ to Mr. Lincoln, planted himself in the only chair that

lay near him, with a solar hat in his hand while his old father continued to stand. Mr. Lincoln only smiled at the childish truculence of the youth, while the father was biting his lips with rage at his son's lack of manners. Ali deliberately did not take off his shoes and purposely sat on the chair with a view to creating a scene and becoming a martyr of the white man's rudeness and cruelty.

"Which year are you in, Ali?"

"Third year."

"What do you propose to do after you have finished your studies?"

"I am not going to seek service, but I am determined to become a political worker and labour for the freedom of my country."

"What changes would you like to see in the governance of your country?"

"First of all, I would give all the fat jobs to my countrymen."

"Suppose we associated them with us in holding the fat administrative jobs?"

"That would only prolong the agony a little longer."

"But you have no men yet to take our place. Your people have no administrative experience."

"How can we get this experience unless we are put there, and you have the power to decide whether we are placed in those jobs or not. The whole thing moves in a vicious circle."

"You must not worry any more, Ali, because you have your own parliaments in the Provinces and your own Public Service Commissions and you can recruit whom you like."

"Oh yes, but what about the two plum services, the Indian Civil Service and the Imperial Police Service? The recruitment to these is still in the hands of the Secretary of State for India in London."

"But you have fifty per cent. of the places reserved for Indians."

"Yes, but they will be your servants and not ours."

"This is only the beginning, Ali. Don't be in a hurry, everything will pass into your hands in course of time."

"I should like to know what this course of time is."

"What else would you like to see done?"

"I would abolish all land taxes."

"How would you raise money for running your Government?"

"We would tax the money-lenders."

"They are only a handful and cannot provide all that is needed."

"That remains to be seen. New parliaments have just come into existence and we have our own ministers. They will see to it that all the heavy taxation disappears."

"More power to your elbow, Ali. We have done our best to hand over to you a united, well-governed and prosperous country. May you continue to enjoy this peace and prosperity. Perhaps you will have a good word for us when we are gone."

"Why should we thank you for the peace? You only established police, law courts, and rules and regulations so that you could trade all the more easily and collect the taxes."

"We don't take the tax money to England."

"Don't you?"

"Not one penny. You can now see that from your own provincial budget presented to your parliament."

"But what did you do with that money in the past?"

"We gave you good roads."

"Yes, because you wanted to get about easily in your motor cars and because you wanted to collect taxes and keep law and order with ease ;

because you wanted to get higher prices for the Government lands which you auctioned in the canal colonies."

"We have given you four million acres of perennially irrigated lands and abolished famines for all times. And every penny of the money received from the sales of land has gone into the Punjab Government treasury."

"You only constructed those canals because you wanted investment for British capital and grain for the people of England."

"We have given you improved seeds, better cattle. The new 8A. wheat cultured by an English officer at the Lyallpur Agricultural College—where there are a thousand students now—has trebled the outturn per acre; similar has been the achievement of 4F. American cotton from the same College. The Punjab produces as much cotton per acre as U. S. A. We have set up well organised Agricultural and Veterinary Departments and Co-operative Societies."

"You did that just to feed the goose that lays the golden egg. How could a poor people pay you taxes?"

"We have given you free hospitals, even in the villages—which is not the case in England."

"You only set up hospitals and health departments because you were yourselves afraid of catching our diseases. You did not do that for us."

"We gave you freedom of person and speech."

"I like that. What about the hundreds of our political workers who have rotted in your jails?"

"What about your own ministers who are using the very same so-called oppressive laws? I am talking of the Provinces where you have complete home rule, not of the centre."

"That does not matter. We don't mind being sent to jail by our own people."

"So you don't object to the laws we framed but only to the persons who use those laws."

"Exactly."

"Have you a good word for us at all, Ali, after all we have done to develop your country?"

"I shall have to think hard. All that you did was from selfish motives."

"I suppose you will next say that all your father has done for you is from selfish motives."

"What kindness has my father shown me by producing me? I am the result of a certain selfish act of his. He enjoyed himself and I was born. He could not help it."



Khadim, who was boiling with rage, intervened and remarked very gently.

"Sir, I repudiate all responsibility for the production of this brat. He can't be my son. If he were he would never have talked like this. Of course we owe everything to you. India was never one country before you made it so. We never before in the whole of our history enjoyed this freedom of person that you have given us. What you see is the result of modern education. You wanted to educate us in your language so that you might have good clerks and look what you have produced. God help India in the future if unreasonable and suspicious-minded men like my son are to take charge of the country from you. Ali has said some very hard things, Sir, and I do hope you won't take them to heart. The whole of India does not think as he does."

The conversation had taken a very unpleasant turn. Khadim realising that the Sahib was not in a mood to listen to his request about his son-in-law, decided to change the topic of conversation by asking a question."

"How do you like my son's English, Sir?"

"He knows too much, in my opinion, Khadim. But all the same I am not sorry for the

education we have helped to spread. We have established flourishing agricultural, medical, engineering, law, commercial and art colleges. The number of young men in the Punjab who go up to the university is the same per ten thousand of population as it is in England. It's not a bad record we are leaving. Posterity will judge us fairly, I hope. Don't think I am angry, Khadim. Good-bye for the present. By the way, since Ali thinks we have made the people of his country unhappy, would he like to go and live in a Muslim country?"

"Why should I leave my own country, particularly when it is more advanced than most Muslim countries."

"Would you like to live in some other part of the East?"

"No, thank you. We have got our Parliament now and you Sahibs will have to accept our ministers as your bosses. We can tolerate you as servants—but not as autocratic rulers."

"Thank you for all the implied compliments, Ali."

As the father and son came out of the tent Khadim said to his son :

"There, you son of a donkey, you have spoilt the whole thing about your brother-in-law's headmanship."

Ali did not speak a word, for he was angry with his father for the unnecessary politeness he always showed to Government officials. In his opinion the bravest thing to do was to give a talking to every white man on every possible occasion.

Lincoln, having gathered as much information as he possibly could from the conversation during the interviews regarding the financial position of the villagers, decided to have a walk through the village streets. He wanted to see some of the homes to get a real insight into the way the people lived and in order to judge their capacity to pay the land revenue. He was also interested in health work and took every opportunity of telling the agriculturists to keep their streets clean and to ventilate their houses as much as possible. Ventilators were almost non-existent. There was usually only one door to a farmer's mud-house, in which the smell of fuf was usually so repulsive that it was hardly possible for a man who had been walking in fresh air to step in. He was also interested in seeing the sort of water they drank and the

manner in which they kept cattle. Occasionally he went inside the rooms and was able to see whether the bedding, the furniture, and the cooking and other pots on the floors or on shelves near the ceiling were any indication of the economic position of the people. The vast majority of them possessed nothing but rags for bedding and had very little of these. A few earthen pots—cooking vessels, kneading trough and milk containers—baked by the village potter, could be seen here and there. Those that had any corn kept it in bins made out of mud and dried in the sun. Some of the people still possessed the pots which had been presented to their womenfolk at their weddings either by way of a dowry by the father-in-law or by their parents. The women usually had a few silver rings in their ears. The farmers considered it a great disgrace to mortgage these when raising a loan, although sometimes they had to be sold to buy the necessities of life. All other jewellery, if it ever existed, had parted company with the owners in most cases and was safely lodged in the moneylender's shop. But what jewellery remained with the farmers' wives, was no indication of the farmer's wealth because a man might be neck deep in debt and yet his wife might wear jewellery.

After a short round of the farmers' houses, Lincoln went out for an afternoon ride. He was very regular in taking exercise.

While he was out riding he met Ali who was riding his young five year old black mare, called "Knight Caps." Her sire was a famous English race-horse bought and imported by the Army Remount Department and placed at Sargodha to render free service. Mr. Lincoln greeted Ali first. He wanted to make up for the morning's unpleasantness. After all, Ali was only a boy. Ali also smiled. To cement the friendliness Mr. Lincoln challenged Ali to a race. Nothing could please Ali more. They both moved away from the road which was full of cattle, and the moment they entered the open fields they both let go their animals and yelled like wild men. Ali won the race. They both shook hands and parted as friends. That night Ali told his boy friends in the village that the best way of making friends with a white man was to beat him at sports.

As Lincoln returned to the village at sundown he noticed a few farmers along the roadside looking rather flushed in the face. A bull was standing by. This was the Government-owned stallion bull of the village. A cow was

being led away with a rope tied round her horns. Mr. Lincoln's thoughts were taken back to a time long past when he first entered the Service and his hirsute and trusty servant Sher Khan had taken upon himself the role of his guide, philosopher and friend. He recalled to himself the very serious advice which Sher Khan used to give him about the desirability of getting married quickly and producing children. He also remembered the day, some years before Marjorie was born when Sher Khan had, in the presence of Mrs. Lincoln, advised his master to marry a second time and thus produce a son quickly, a son who would be his heir and keeper of the name of his family. A smile appeared on Lincoln's face when he thought of the scolding which he gave Sher Khan for making such a tactless remark in the presence of his wife. The advice had been volunteered with the best intention in the world, yet it was unwelcome. He knew that Sher Khan had no ill-will towards his wife, and had even pressed that Mrs. Lincoln should have no objection to a second marriage, for after all the son would be her son, even though a step-son, and, God forbid, in case of Mr. Lincoln's death, the son would be able to support and look after both his mothers.

Sher Khan had pressed Mrs. Lincoln to be a wise and far-seeing woman and consent to her husband getting another wife. But as the conversation on that occasion got worse and worse Mr. Lincoln had risen from his chair and walked out of the room. He also recalled some of those intimate moments which often took place between most good masters and faithful servants. Sher Khan had often offered intimate advice to the bachelor Mr. Lincoln. He was aware of the little flirtations, mild and innocent, which Mr. Lincoln used to have with young women of his country whom he met on very rare occasions when he went to Lahore. Perhaps Sher Khan read more in those meetings than there had been in reality. Mr. Lincoln recalled the jokes which Sher Khan had with him at the cost of a Mrs. "X." Sher Khan had once explained to him that the poor in India were prolific because they were hungry and that the rich people had few children because they over-fed themselves. Once, Mr. Lincoln, with a roguish smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, had asked Sher Khan why he observed the custom of fasting so faithfully and rigorously. Was there any motive behind his thirty days' continuous

starvation, when between sunrise and sundown he neither ate nor drank nor smoked nor smelled a flower ? Sher Khan had on that occasion retorted by quoting the Persian saying : “ When you can eat the plums in this world and also hope for a reward hereafter, why not ? ” If by fasting one could earn a reward for the next world and improve his health in this, why not ? Sher Khan had told Mr. Lincoln that at the end of the month of fasting a man felt rejuvenated. He remarked that it was wrong of his Sahib to suspect that he kept the fast mainly to feel vigorous for the rest of the year. Mr. Lincoln felt satisfied that his remark had gone home and had had the desired result of putting Sher Khan on the defensive. He also recalled the occasion when he had remarked that Sher Khan dyed his beard with henna to look young and attractive, a remark which Sher Khan in his heart of hearts much appreciated since not only was it a compliment to his worthy appearance, but also made him feel that his Sahib still considered him young and strong enough for the discharge of his duties.

While Lincoln rode along enjoying these reflections, he heard farmers singing their way home. There was one man sitting on a bullock



with both legs hanging on one side and singing :

“ Oh, my beloved, above the house is a kite.

Meet me, my beloved, even if you have to swim through a hundred thousand rivers.”

And again he sang :

“ Oh, my beloved, above the house is a kite.

Your soul and my soul meet in dreams every night.”

There was another man carrying a bundle of fodder on his head as he drove a few head of cattle in front of him. He had evidently not yet received the attention which in his view his ardency had deserved at the hands of his sweetheart, for he sang :

“ The beloved should see her lover with truly loving eyes even though her lover be a poor man.”

Lincoln also noticed a group of women who had been out on a crop (wheat) cutting expedition, and one of these, who was well known to be in love with a cousin, sang :

“ There is a pair of birds.

The man I love is also the light of my eyes,” and another girl who had been disappointed in love sang :

“ As you stole my heart so return it to me, the humble and the crushed one.”

The sun could be seen setting behind the tall sissou trees and through the clouds of dust raised by the incoming cattle. The air was full of the smell of burning cow-dung and orange blossom scent, which came from Khadim's orange grove. Lincoln quite enjoyed this mixture of the unpleasant and the sublime, so much in evidence in this country, which the Moguls once called a "sample of heaven." As he rode through the village streets, he could hear the cattle bells, mingled with the sound of farmers' talks in their homes. He could also hear a few dogs barking. The chirping of a million sparrows and crows in the trees gave signal of the oncoming wave of complete darkness which was to give man and beast a well-deserved rest after their day's toil and fatigue. The whole atmosphere made Mr. Lincoln happy.

Dorothy had met James Lincoln at Oxford. When James had succeeded in the I. C. S. competitive examination and gone back to Oxford as a probationer, she came in close contact with him and they became real friends. Dorothy suddenly had a spiritual call. She felt that the East needed her and that her real work lay in alleviating the suffering of the sick, the poor and the distressed in India. She had read a great deal about

Christ and was very much taken by the Christian spirit. She had arrived in India with missionary zeal in her heart. But towards the latter part of her career her enthusiasm wore off a little as she gradually found that she was striking her head against a mountain of ignorance and poverty in that great country. There were no health services in 1895 when she started her career and no funds barring what she could collect from her friends in England. She started an appeal for a leprosy fund, which later developed into the formation in England of an Indian Leprosy Relief Society. She persuaded a girl friend of hers who was a medical graduate to found a small mission hospital for women at Ludhiana, since she knew that Indian women were too shy to approach the men doctors for a very large number of women's diseases and consequently they continued to suffer without any assistance. There were no qualified Indian women doctors at all. At first when she went into the villages she often spent a little of her own money on medicines and bandages---and she served as an unofficial doctor much better than the Indian quack medicine men, with the result that most of the women in the villages which she

visited frequently began to look upon her as a medical woman. She also helped the poor women in buying clothes in the winter, but there were so many of these deserving cases and each one worse than the other, that she came to the conclusion that the whole population needed her assistance. Her own money was not commensurate with the needs of the poor, and giving money to a few created heart-burning in others. The task of raising the purchasing power of the people appeared hopeless, and yet she felt that she could not stand by and do nothing. It was beyond her personal capacity, but her heart was in the work. Dorothy was a tenacious Scotch woman and always believed in doing things with all her might. Whenever her husband went touring in the villages she accompanied him. But she often liked roaming into the village homes on her own. When the husband was out riding, Dorothy went into the village and took Marjorie with her. The villagers knew her very well, for she had been there on many occasions before and had visited the homes of the farmers, menials and others, and talked to their women-folk. To-day she was particularly keen on going round the whole village, because she wanted Marjorie to see everything that went on.

She was also sure that her acquaintances would be very pleased to see her beautiful little daughter.

She first of all took her to the moneylender's shop. She noticed that the moneylender must have guessed that she was going her usual round in the morning because he had swept the street clean in front of his shop and he had watered the floor of his verandah. The courtyard of his house, which adjoined the shop, also looked clean. The platform in this courtyard on which he and his wife had their meals was freshly plastered with mud and cow dung and looked beautifully clean with a nice brown crust on the surface. The moment Mrs. Lincoln and her daughter entered the women's quarters, out crawled a twelve-year old girl from the living room. The *bania's* wife tried in vain to stop her. This little girl could not stand erect. She moved along on her haunches, resting her weight on the palms of her hands, as she dragged her buttocks along the ground. The *bania* had told the child to keep inside the room while the Mem Sahib was about, but she was not going to be deprived of a chance of seeing the Mem Sahib or her daughter. She had defied all parental injunctions and sallied forth from her seclusion.

Dorothy was horrified to see one more wretch who had to continue for the rest of her life to suffer from osteomalacia. This girl was lucky, because her case was not the worst of its kind. There were some border-line cases where young women were able to walk about with their deformed pelvises and who ordinarily got married like fully-grown women. But the under-nourishment in their younger days had inflicted them with malformation of the body, which the unsuspecting girls did not realise. The vast majority of such persons died during child-birth. Some escaped through a Caesarian operation, but the doctors who could perform such a delicate and dangerous operation were few and far between and the poor people never reached them. Dorothy had during the course of the previous year done two things in the Kangra Valley, where she had been touring in the summer. Firstly, when she discovered that the only village leper, who lived outside the village in a hut made of reeds, had been suddenly burned to death, may be by accident or by deliberate action of the villagers, she appealed to England for funds to start homes for lepers. Secondly, she had come across certain osteomalacia cases, which prevailed mainly in the Kangra

Valley and in the Simla Hills where vegetables could not be grown plentifully owing to the heavy rains which washed away the earth and manure, and where people owing to their particular superstitions did not eat all the food that God had provided for them. Some were averse to eating eggs or chickens, others could not eat meat and some did not eat certain kinds of fruit. Consequently on account of superstition, their physical development was always incomplete. Dorothy had appealed to the Red Cross Society in Sweden, who had very generously promised to give her one ton of cod liver oil every year for the use of these poor osteomalacia-stricken patients in the Kangra Valley. Dorothy founded a small Red Cross centre there for distributing the oil with the assistance of a sister institution, a Canadian mission.

The little girl whom Dorothy saw in the moneylender's house was really not his daughter but had been adopted by him. He had paid Rs. 50 for her. She had been brought, by lawful or other means, from the Kangra Valley. The moneylender and his wife never knew who the parents of this girl were. When she was young it was not known that she was stricken with osteomalacia. It was just the misfortune of the

moneylender that she turned out to be like this in later years. Dorothy knew that if the moneylender had fed her well and had given her proper and nourishing food, her physical deformity could have been overcome to a certain extent, but he was ignorant and miserly. All the consolation that Dorothy could give to this girl was to tell her to expose herself to the sun as much as possible and drink as much milk as she could persuade her adoptive father and mother to allow her. She wondered very much at the ignorance of the Indian people. There was a time when the Indo-Aryans were the finest soldiers in the world, with muscular bodies difficult to match anywhere. They lived in the open air and drank milk plentifully, and ate meat. Unfortunately, as centuries passed by in India, some of her children turned away from their ancestral habits and modes of living and became more inclined towards vegetarianism. The bodies of some of them were undernourished and the life of the nation was being gradually sapped on account of improper food. Dorothy used to ask herself the question: why was it that some of the descendants of the Aryans, who were the greatest meat-eaters of their time, no longer ate meat? She was not aware



of the causes that contributed to this change in the diet of some of the Indian people.

Dorothy and Marjorie greeted the money-lender's wife, who was very sorry that her daughter was in poor health and complained that she had no children of her own. She had adopted a son, but unfortunately he was not very careful with his money and she feared that the future of the family would not be safe in his hands.

"Why?" asked Mrs. Lincoln.

"Because he does not show signs of the care which is necessary in our profession. About a month ago my husband went out on one of his debt-collecting tours and he left our adopted son, who is now 24, in charge of all the property, and on his return he discovered that the boy had behaved rather extravagantly."

"In what way?"

"Whenever my husband was left in charge of the shop by his father—all he had to eat was dry wheaten bread and one slice of pickled mango. My husband, during the absence of his father, used to hang this pickled mango from the roof and just pointed at it pieces of bread which thereafter he put in his mouth, with the result that when his father came back he was delighted to find that his son had saved up the pickled

mango almost entirely. Thus he knew that his son would carry on his trade with great honour and glory.

“What has your adopted son done?”

“When my husband left him, this boy put the pickle on his plate and pushed it from one side to the other with a piece of bread by actually touching it. Although it did not diminish the quantity of pickle, you see the spirit of extravagance is there, and my husband and I are both afraid that he will not be a credit to his class, for his ways are rather extravagant. My husband has been a very careful man in his lifetime. He once lost the brass bowl of his smoking pipe when he was a young man. His father asked him how he was going to get it back, and my husband answered; ‘out of my stomach.’ ‘How?’ ‘I will cut my food, and the more food I keep out of my stomach the more pice I shall have to buy a new brass bowl with.’ My husband’s father gave a great laugh, for he knew that his son was a wise man and that he would accumulate more and more wealth in the way of all the most famous *baniyas* of Hindustan. One of our great principles is never to touch our capital, but to go on accumulating interest. Sometimes people die without paying

their debts. Those cases are very unfortunate, because after we have lent them money they make use of it during their lifetime, then they pop off and we cannot recover a pie. Sometimes these farmers come and beg my husband for money. They contract bigamous marriages and wear beautiful clothes, and then they kick the bucket and our money is lost. I have sometimes advised my husband regarding the desirability of his making use of his money himself, and he has always come out with the retort that a moneylender is never born to spend money."

"Do you find that your decrees are properly executed and that your husband recovers his debts through warrants of attachment in sufficient quantities to help you to recover your capital and a fair proportion of the interest?"

"The law is excellent, Mem Sahib. But there are certain practical difficulties. For example, sometimes the farmers tip the officials who bring the warrants of attachment and a report goes back that nothing worth taking was found. But sometimes my husband tips these fellows first, and he goes with them for the attachment of property. Then these very officials go and attach the farmer's animals

tied in the open courtyard. There is no other property to attach. Whether they belong to the debtor or to his brothers or sisters or cousins or parents-in-law or friends, does not matter. If they happen to be within that compound they are attached. That is the end of them so far as their owners are concerned, but it helps us to recover part of our debt. The real owners find it very difficult to prove that the animals belonged to them and my husband always gets away with it. Oh, we do offer our thanks, Mem Sahib, for the courts that the white man has established in this country, for in the olden days it was almost impossible to recover any of our debts. The recovery depended entirely on the sweet will of the agent of the kings, and as these fellows lived in the villages they made friends with the farmers and agriculturists, and the moneylenders depended entirely on their favour. We seldom recovered our own capital. In accordance with our laws, the laws of Manu, no moneylender could take by way of interest more than one hundred per cent. of what he had lent. If the amount due on account of interest exceeded the original sum lent, the interest stopped accumulating. But your law is much more reasonable, since you allow the

interest to go on growing with the passing of years. Your laws of contract and civil procedure, which are based on your own excellent laws that prevail in England, are most welcome to us. Thanks to the white merchants of Calcutta and of all the other big cities, the laws made for them help us also. We are brothers in trade, our interests are the same. Along with the ship floats a small boat, they say—that is our idea, Mem Sahib. If the British merchant floats, we also float. The law is good. If it so happens that the debtor has no property at all and our debt cannot be recovered, my husband still has a remedy.”

“ Oh, what remedy has he ? ”

“ Well, he applies for the arrest of the debtor who has failed to obey the decree.”

“ What does he do with him then ? ”

“ He is sent to gaol for six months for non-payment of his debt. My husband has to pay for the food of the debtor while he is in jail, and often when we find that, by means of this pressure, we have not succeeded in persuading the women-folk of the debtor and his relations and friends to sell and mortgage their jewellery to get the debtor out of jail, then we refuse to pay his board allowance and the man is let out. But

my husband never does this until he is absolutely sure that there is no possibility of the money coming from any quarter whatsoever. The imprisonment is simple. They do not have to do hard labour, but being shut up inside the jail is a terrible disgrace for them and the relations and friends do everything to get them out. Consequently we are particularly grateful to the Sircar for this provision of the law, which helps us to put the debtor in jail and thereby forces him to make payment towards our debts. But these farmers too, Mem Sahib, are a very tough lot."

"In what way?"

"Oh, there was one man who was too clever even for my husband."

"What happened?"

"This man colluded with the medical officer in charge of the jail and said that he was accustomed to eating opium and if he were not given a proper quantity of opium every day he was bound to die. Consequently from the very day that he was jugged he claimed this opium, and as that was expensive my husband drew him away as a bad egg, and the man escaped. If the price of opium had not been high I am sure we should have recovered our money."

" But I am afraid you can no longer have the farmers sent to jail, because the new Indian parliaments have passed a law that no one can be sent to jail for non-payment of a civil debt."

" That is why the farmers are so happy with you people for giving them new parliaments. Being more in number, they have more votes and are therefore passing laws which will ruin us poor moneylenders. We are already very hard hit by the law that an English chap called Thorburn had passed even before these parliaments came into existence."

" What was that law ?"

" It was called the Land Alienation Act. Under that law no farmer could sell his land to a moneylender nor could his land be sold in execution of a decree."

" That was rather good for the poor farmers, who are such good-hearted souls and loyal subjects of the king."

" Yes, but it was very hard luck on us, who are also law-abiding subjects of the same King. But I don't grumble. We moneylenders have many things to be thankful for, particularly the courts and the lawyer class. Thanks to the British for that. We used to be despised before,

but now our calling is honourable. We are bankers on a small scale. I wish you could stop the use of the word '*bania*' and have it replaced by the word 'banker.' "

"That will be rather difficult but I am glad you appreciate the great boons that the British Raj has conferred upon you and your class."

"Of course I do," replied the *bania*'s wife. "You must not think that this law of imprisonment for debt was a harsh one, Mem Sahib. I assure you it was not. We are told that it originated in Calcutta, where the simple-minded, trusting and honest European merchants used to have dealings with clever Indians from Marwar who always kept double account books, and after borrowing heavily in the market or buying goods on credit used to hide their money and declare themselves insolvent by burning candles in their shops in broad daylight and sitting there bare-headed. The moment they were put into jail, out came all the money. This law has worked beautifully."

"It was not really meant for poor people living in the remote villages, Mrs. Gobind, and I am afraid the day is not far off when the new law passed recently will be put into force. But you can make hay while the sun shines. I am



glad you know that you discovered some affinity between the English merchants and yourselves. No doubt they will be glad to know that it is a great honour to swim or to sink together with you."

"It was very kind of you to have come here, Mem Sahib. May God bless you and the great Sircar. But tell me, Mem Sahib, what is the salary of your husband?"

"Rs. 1,500 a month."

"My word! And what do you do with it?"

"We spend it every month. We have no money saved."

"Do you eat gold or silver? What do you do with this money? If I had that money I could spread out the rupees and they would cover the whole floor of my husband's shop, and yet you and your husband spend it every month. What do you do with it?"

It was time for Mrs. Lincoln to go back, so she avoided further discussion and bade good-bye to the money-lender's wife. It was rather late that day to visit any more homes. So Mrs. Lincoln went back to her tent.

The homunculus of a money-lender returned home in the evening after his interview with the Sahib, rather pleased with himself. He was

all smiles and everything looked rosy. He had had a very successful talk with Mr. Lincoln and the thought of it made him so happy that he seemed to be jumping out of his clothes as he walked home. The Sahib had shown him a great favour by giving him the longest interview that morning. The conversation was very intimate and friendly. The Sahib had made very tender enquiries about the *bania*'s welfare and about the individual members of his family, and expressed the hope that he was doing well in his money-lending business and recovering his debts, which would incidentally show that the farmers were doing well. The Sahib had also enquired of him whether the farmers had been borrowing more money, and if so for what purposes. He was particularly desirous of knowing if any of the farmers had borrowed any money to pay bribes to the local police officials. It was customary for all money-lenders to enter in their books the purpose for which each borrower took the money from him. In this case, however, the *bania* was on good terms with the local police sub-inspector, and there was a cause for it. About a year earlier, when the sub-inspector was freshly posted to this area, he soon realised that Gobind was the most well-to-do of all the

money-lenders and everybody who wanted any money for bribes went to him. It was consequently essential for his purposes to be on the best of terms with this *bania*. He arranged with some burglars to steal all the account books belonging to Gobind, and after many pretended difficulties the sub-inspector of police obliged his friend, the money-lender, by having the books returned, and thus Gobind had been placed under a lifelong obligation to the sub-inspector. Therefore he could never let him down by telling the Sahib that any of the farmers were borrowing money to pay bribes to the sub-inspector. Although the documents had in fact mentioned that the money had been borrowed in several cases for the sub-inspector, the money-lender was safe with Mr. Lincoln, because as was the case with all money-lenders his account books were kept in a special script. This was known only to the money-lender class and nobody outside that class could read it. As a matter of fact, it was so horribly difficult and specialised a script that even a money-lender himself sometimes could not read his own writing. Such a system of keeping accounts was essential not only in order to avoid income-tax, but also to puzzle the courts in which suits were filed.

Consequently, for the continuous prosperity of this class it was essential that the account should continue to be kept in this outlandish script.

When Lincoln enquired from the money-lender the general condition of corruption and bribery amongst other Government servants, Gobind found his life's chance, to have a dig at a sub-judge who belonged to the agricultural classes and sympathised with the farmers, often cutting down the exorbitant rates of interest which Gobind secured from the ignorant peasants. He loathed nothing more than losing portions of interest, and thus his worst enemy was the judge, who reduced what was his due by way of interest from his debtors. This income from his money-lending was, as the proverb goes, "like his mother's milk to him". He did not mind losing his capital, but he never remitted a single penny of the interest. He told Mr. Lincoln all sorts of tales against the agriculturist sub-judge, but Lincoln was no fool. He had experienced many incidents of this nature in the past and could not be deceived by the guiles of his cunning visitor. He went on smiling, and thus drew out Gobind more and more. They talked for a very long time.

At first the money-lender was very, very cautious and would not say much, but Lincoln, with his usual tact and smile, warmed up the money-lender's heart and drew out as much information as he possibly could. For Gobind to talk was much against the injunctions of his wife, who had warned him against opening out his heart too much to the Sahib for fear of incurring income-tax. There was an income-tax of 4*d.* in the pound, but this was charged only on incomes of Rs. 2,000 or more per annum, and the money-lenders kept their accounts in such a way that they were absolutely certain that no Englishman, however clever, would ever be able to find out whether their incomes had reached the taxable limit or not.

It was about sunset when Gobind returned home, after having seen a lot of friends in the village and doing some business. He took off his turban and exposed his closely shaven head, with a tuft of hair about eighteen inches long on the top. He took his shirt off too, and pulled about the sacred thread which went over his right shoulder and under the left. He filled a large brass tumbler with cold water from an earthen pitcher resting on a high stool and swilled his mouth with water, then, making a

ouch with his lips, he threw it out to a considerable distance, quenching the thirsty dust lying about his feet. He was so experienced in emitting this jet of water that even a garden syringe could not have acted better. He took off his shoes, because an orthodox Hindu could not walk into his house with leather on his feet. He stepped on to a little platform just outside his house, on which there was a small open hearth. It was on this platform that he ate his food, and that very morning his wife had plastered it clean with mud and cow dung. It had to be done every day. He sat down on a low stool, in front of him was a brass tray which held a small quantity of lentil curry, two cakes of wheaten bread, and a glass of milk. While he ate he talked a little with his wife, who was at first waiting on him, but was later invited to join him in the meal. She also sat down on a separate stool with her own tray of food in front of her. He ate avariciously and drank copiously, since a joyous heart had given him a very good appetite. The wheaten bread was made of whole-meal flour, made from his own wheat received from debtors, ground in the village stone-mill driven by the oxen of some debtor or another, and cooked in his own

house. He tucked in greedily, but the heat of the day had made his inside very dry and the drink of milk made him belch like a roaring lion who had just finished devouring his prey. His meal finished, he walked over in great style to his bed, which had already been prepared by his wife in the open courtyard. He picked up his *huga*, with its brass water-bowl and a straight wooden-pipe. This was different from the smoking-pipe of the farmer, which consisted of a leather water-bowl and a bent wooden-pipe covered with thread. The money-lender's pipe was usually the neater and the more expensive of the two. Moreover, from a religious point of view, he did not like the leather-bowl; it might have been made of cow hide. The leather-bowl was certainly the cooler kind, but that was of little consideration in the face of a very strongly-embedded sentiment over the question of leather of a doubtful kind. The money-lender's pipe had already been prepared by his wife. She had finished her meal earlier than her husband, even though she had started later. She had put the fire on the tobacco bowl. As he sat on his bed, the palm of his left hand gently stroked the top of his head, expressive of the great satisfaction and glee that he felt at the

termination of a very successful day. He was an old man and he had lost some of his front teeth. His tongue kept on falling out, but he much enjoyed the fun of pulling it back every time. His right hand was placed carefully and slowly on the mouth of the pipe. He gradually bent his head to suck up the cooled smoke as it came through the water, losing a great part of its nicotine. It could be noticed in his face that his joy and satisfaction was no less than that of a tiger sucking away blood at the throat of a killed animal. His wife, who had for a few minutes been standing near him with her arms akimbo and feeling pleased at having made her old man happy, suddenly jumped up to her own bed and before her husband had the chance of telling her all that had happened to him during the course of the day, she crossed her legs in front of herself, rested her fore-arms on her knees, and with a smile fired away :

“What a charming woman the Mem Sahib is ! While you were perhaps talking to the Sahib she came to our house.”

“What did she say ? I hope you did not let out any secrets. One has to be very careful when talking to the white people. You don’t



know how they may use the information which they collect from you."

"Well, my dear, I am no fool. I am a very sensible woman, as you should know by now. I have never let out a family secret yet, and why should I have fallen from my principles on this occasion? I am surprised at your asking that question. You remember that thieves tore my ear-rings away and yet I did not tell them where our safe keys were. No fear, I never give secrets away."

"Well, tell me, what did you say?"

"First of all, I fired a hundred and one questions at her before she could have the chance of making enquiries of me."

"Well?"

"I asked her about her children, about her sisters, her brothers, and her parents and uncles and their homes and their incomes, and I also asked her what the salary of her own husband was."

"What a stupid thing to do. You are a very inquisitive woman. Why did you ask such a delicate question?"

"Oh, you men-folk do not understand these things. We women love talking. The more

personal our conversation the greater friends we become."

"All right. Go on, tell me all that happened."

"She told me that her husband's salary was Rs. 1,500 per mensem and before I could ask her another question she told me that they spent every penny of it. They get 1,500 rupees, all beautiful white silver rupees with the face of the King on them, and she spends every one of them. Just imagine."

"Did she tell you how she spent all that money?"

"Yes, she said that she had to pay rent and then the wages of the cook and the valet and the waiter, the water-carrier, the sweeper, the gardener and the two grooms, the washerman, the watchman, and I do not know how many things she counted. She said they drank so much alcohol and scores of different things. These Europeans are funny. They need so many things to keep them alive. But I was much impressed by the fact that she had to put away a little money every month in order to collect her fare home to England; this, I am told, is very, very expensive."

"Well, it is good thing, my dear, that these white people spend all the money they earn,

otherwise they would be taking it away home. It is a good thing to make their life as expensive as possible."

"Goodness gracious, how can a man spend a whole heap of rupees every month? Why, by the end of the year, if you placed those rupees in a heap you could make a dog sit under their shade. These Englishmen, judging from the way they drink and eat, seem to be not men but alligators. They swallow and drink everything. They pass fortunes through their bellies. You remember that Sahib we once saw in a neighbouring village, with a red face and fairly good-looking? I was told that he was the worst white man in the whole country so far as drinking was concerned."

"I certainly like to keep my money. You know that I do not waste any money like that at all, and I would not like my name and that of my family to be disgraced by my having to burn candles on the floor of my shop in broad daylight."

"But what use is your wealth to you? You stint yourself all your life, and look what happens. The farmers enjoy themselves on the fruits of your labour. They borrow the money from you,

they go and get married to beautiful women and wear beautiful clothes, which they buy with your money, and having enjoyed themselves thoroughly in this world they pop off and all your money goes West. Why don't you spend that money yourself?"

She nearly said: "Why don't you enjoy yourself?" but she stopped short, for she knew that if she pressed the old man too much, in spite of his age he might jump into another marriage with a young girl, which was well understood to be the usual form of enjoyment for people of his age.

"Oh, but they do pay. I never lose my money. If they cannot pay I fleece the others who can pay—even though money is not due from them—so on the whole I never lose money."

Mrs. Gobind sat with an expression on her face inviting her husband to relate what had happened to him during the day.

"I have had one of the most pleasant days of my life, my dear."

"Tell me, what happened?"

"Oh, I had a very long interview with the Sahib and he asked me all sorts of questions."

"I hope *you* did not let out any family secrets."

“ Oh, no, old girl, I am too experienced for that sort of thing. He asked me all sorts of pertinent and sensible questions. He looks young, but he has a lot of brain. He sometimes pretended to be ignorant, but I was on the alert all the time, for I knew that that was only a pose of his to extract useful information from me. Sometimes he became quite inquisitive. Anyhow, I never told him the truth when it came to real facts, facts which could create trouble for me. Whenever he reached a crucial point I slipped out of his hand like a piece of soap. I know a hundred and one dodges of throwing dust in the eyes of these people. That is my life-long experience now.”

“ What do you mean ?”

“ When he asked me how much money I had saved during the year I was very wary. I felt immediately that he was fishing for information and having secured these facts from me he might persuade the people higher up to pass special laws against us poor money-lenders. At the moment, I certainly do not pay any tax. As you know, I manage to evade paying income-tax, and he will never be able to discover how much income I have. But it is always best to be doubly safe, and on this point I was not

having anything at all to do with him. The farmers are always complaining to him—I am told by his servants—that they bear all the burden of taxation in the country and we, the money-lenders, and our children equally share with them the benefits of all schools, roads, hospitals, and so on.”

“What did you say?”

“I praised him to the skies and I sang songs in favour of the white man for all that he had meant to us poor money-lenders and the protection we had received from him, and how his law courts were useful to us.”

“Yes.”

“He was in a jolly mood on the whole, and I told him some things to amuse him all the more and make him laugh.”

“Was he successful in drawing you out?”

“Oh no, I just told him some amusing tales.”

“Never mind, let me know what you told him.”

“I recounted some interesting episodes of my calling. I told him that Baluch Khan, the man with the big white turban and flowing robes and nicely greased, long, henna-dyed beard who came to see him, was actually a

penniless chap. He owed me Rs. 1,500 and on one occasion he had a quarrel with me and abused me in the presence of others. I told him that I had made up my mind to take my revenge. I never forgive an insult, particularly when it is given in the presence of others. Baluch Khan had an account with me, and I put in some interpolations and by a careful manipulation of figures I altered the whole character of his debt. Being illiterate, he had to give his thumb impression, and I saw to it that the page on which his impression appeared contained few words. Consequently I made my debt mount up sky-high. Then I sued him in court. The Sahib asked me how I got my money back from that man."

"What did you tell him?"

"Oh, I told him that under the Civil Procedure Code I had him sent to jail, and the moment Baluch Khan was there all his women-folk, his relations and brothers, sold their ornaments and jewels. They thought that it was a great disgrace for the family that the chief person should be in jail, so they sold their property and borrowed money from other money-lenders which was a good job too, and paid up my debt."

"But surely you painted rather a rosy picture. You do not always recover money like this."

"I always do."

"Why didn't you tell him something about the difficulties under which we have to work in the villages?"

"I told him several things. For instance, I described how thieves came into our house one day and I was almost certain that they were all my debtors, and how they stole my account books, some of which they burned immediately and we never recovered them. I also told him how the burglars came and tore your ear-rings out of your ears because you would not give them the keys of the safe, and of the occasion when burglars came in and twisted a certain part of my body and I cried so much that you immediately jumped out of your bed and gave them the keys of the safe and they took away all the money."

"What did he say?"

"He sympathised most sincerely with the terrible life we have to lead in the villages. But he felt that our rewards were worth the risks we ran. He asked me what rate of interest I charged. I said that we did not charge interest



at so much per cent. per annum, as did the white man's banks, but our system was different. First of all, when a man came to borrow money, say Rs. 100, I deducted the usual charge that we call 'opening the purse' which is two per cent. Then I charged him a year's interest in advance, which was also paid from this Rs. 100. I paid him the balance, which was never more than Rs. 50, and made him put his thumb impression to a sum of Rs. 100. The interest, I told him, we always charged at the rate of so many pice in the rupee per mensem. If the man is a very good friend of mine I charged only one pice per rupee a month, which works out at 3 annas per rupee per annum, which is about  $22\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. But if he is an ordinary customer I charge two or three pice per rupee a month. Farmers do not feel the burden of it. After all, what is a pice or two in the rupee per month ?

"I also told him of the hard lot of the farmer who mortgaged his wife's jewellery and ornaments and borrowed some money from me to pay his land revenue. But when he got to the headquarters where the money was to be paid into the Treasury, the clerk demanded a bribe because it was late in the afternoon, and

as the farmer did not pay the bribe he was told to come the next day. During the course of the night some pickpockets stole all the money, and he had to come back to borrow more money from me. I told the Sahib that strict orders ought to be issued making the payment of land revenue easy for the farmer. He ought to be allowed to pay this money into any registered bank or a post office."

"Did he ask you any other questions?"

"Yes, he asked me about the animals, and if I had any cows."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him that sometimes I receive a cow or an ox from a debtor in payment of his debt. If it was a milch cow I took the milk and when she went dry I gave her to a farmer and we went shares in her. I told him that if the price of the cow were fixed at Rs. 50, the farmer signed in my books for a loan of Rs. 25, on which I charged interest. He took the cow home and kept her and fed her and had her covered, and when a calf was born he could keep her for half the milking period and I had her for the other half, and if any progeny was sold we shared the money half and half. Meanwhile the interest on my money naturally had to go on mounting."

“ Did he tell you anything on the subject ? ”

“ He told me an incident of some money-lenders he had come across in other parts of the District who had some very shady transactions with their customers. They had false thumb impressions put on their books to involve innocent people. They had bought stamped deeds and kept them in their homes against the law in order to make the illiterate farmers put their thumb impressions on them on future occasions. Sometimes they had passed off false coins on to the farmers. They were in touch with some people who had been in jail in Calcutta where the Government mint is and where they had learned how to coin rupees, and they had engaged these men on a profit-sharing basis.”

“ Did he ask you any other questions ? ”

“ He asked me something about weights and measures.”

“ And what did you say ? ”

“ I told him that I was always straight in these matters, but that I knew of instances of shopkeepers who always used different wooden bowls for measuring corn when buying and when selling. He laughed when I repeated to

him a Punjabi saying which one money-lender quoted to me."

"And what was that?"

" 'Paisa kamaye makar se  
Roti khayeshakar se.'

'Earn your money with cunning, and thereafter eat your bread with sugar.' "

"He seemed to know a lot about our class, didn't he?"

"Oh yes, he did. He told me of one money-lender he met whom you and I both know because he lives not very far from here, who sold a buffalo worth Rs. 50 to a farmer and received from him by way of interest a sum of Rs. 2,300, and after having done so he sold the unpaid debt for Rs. 900 to a cousin money-lender, who in his turn nibbled another Rs. 1,800 from this farmer. I did not tell him that that money-lender was a brother of mine. You know that case."

"My word, these English people are nosy parkers. How they find out these things puzzles me."

"I had not realised until he told me that there were forty thousand money-lenders in the Punjab, and that the amount they received from the farmers by way of interest far exceeded the

total amount of land tax which the farmers paid to the Government.

“Gracious, I did not know there were so many of us and that we were so wealthy. I wonder how these white men can collect figures.”

“Oh, they have these damned Tehsildars stationed in every little nook and corner of the Province, and the *patwaris* in every village; these are the devils who collect all these things against us. Eventually Mr. Lincoln asked me to suggest some way in which the indebtedness of the farmers could be reduced and pressure on them relieved so as to enable them to have a little more food and a little more clothing. I told him that a great deal of social reform was necessary in the villages. The chief things for which they borrowed money were marriages and death parties, which were quite inessential. They also borrowed money for litigation. The lawyer class which the Englishman had introduced was a curse to them. The system of justice was so expensive that there was no justice at all. The farmers borrowed money to pay bribes to Government servants. If the Sircar could stop their servants from taking bribes, the farmers would be all the richer for it, and then there would be more money with

which they could pay their land tax to the Sircar and their debts to the money-lenders. I begged him that he should do nothing by way of reporting to the higher authorities that the poor money-lenders should be taxed, for as it was we had hardly enough to make two ends meet."

By this time Gobind was decidedly sleepy. His wife began to massage his legs, and within a few seconds of putting his head on the pillow, he was snoring hard.

The next morning the moment Lincoln started his work in his office tent, Mrs. Lincoln took hold of her daughter by the hand and accompanied by Sher Khan she went into the village.

The rustic folk were accustomed to such visits by white women. Some thought that they only came round spying to see what sort of houses they lived in, and whether inside their houses there were brass pots showing the wealth of the farmers and their capacity to pay taxes, or only earthenware pots showing that the taxable limit had been already reached and land revenue could not be increased. Some of the village people felt that the white women only came into the villages out of curiosity. Others thought that they came to find material for books and

make money in that way. But they did not mind this, for they were a generous people and felt no ill-will towards persons who made a little money, so long as it did the villagers no immediate personal injury. All the village women expected Mrs. Lincoln to call round practically every day of her stay. She was one of the few white women who did not mind talking to Indian women and walking through their streets and courtyards. Her reputation helped Mrs. Lincoln, for the women felt no constraint in talking to her, which was not the case with the average white man or woman who visited these country people. Even though the country folk were very friendly towards English officers, yet their women received very few visits from white women.

In the lane adjoining their camp lived the farmers. Mrs. Lincoln walked into the first courtyard on her left. There she saw a lovely young woman, well built, her cheeks suffused with colour, such as you find on people who eat simple food, live in the fresh air and do manual work. She was tall, and looked about twenty years old. Her body was lithe and erect. She had clear-cut features, and aquiline nose, dark shining eyes, black hair with a pigtail. She

looked open-hearted, frank and fearless, such as would make a mother of men of character, men who would be brave and strong enough to fight with equal ease in snow or desert. She had been brought up in an extreme climate. In the summer the temperature was 110° in the shade, and in the winter at night it went below freezing point. One could read in her forehead a character possessing a high sense of morality and feminine chastity. She looked a woman whose honour was safe in her own keeping, as safe in the open fields as in the darkest alleys of the towns. She looked a woman who could laugh and talk with you like a boy friend, but there was also something in her look which told you that the moment you took the slightest liberties, you could expect an attack with the instrument nearest at hand. There were some insults which could break off her friendship for good and involve the person concerned in a danger which might lead him to the loss of his life. She was the sort who would never betray her man, the man who was to be the only one for the rest of her life. There were a thousand eyes in the village watching every movement of hers, as of everybody else, and the slightest indication that she was not as straight



as her people expected her to be, would have meant the loss of her honour and respect for the rest of her life.

Mrs. Lincoln knew this girl's mother and all the members of her family. She knew that three of her brothers were in the Army and that they had been seen going about in the village in their uniforms, looking extremely handsome. They had all three been there recently on a week's leave. One of them was in Hodson's Horse, another in King George's 19th Lancers, and the youngest in the 17th Cavalry. The last mentioned had won the regimental jumping championship and had brought a big silver cup home to show to all his pals. The village of Jamalpur received nearly Rs. 1,000 a month either by way of widows' pensions or allowances for wives of serving soldiers.

Mrs. Lincoln had watched Daulat Bibi for several years as she grew up to womanhood. She possessed a robust physique, as sturdy as her character. In her habits she was indefatigable and Trojan in her perseverance. Mrs. Lincoln knew that women of this sort were the backbone of the country. This particular girl, was cheerful, noble and honourable in spite of her poverty. She also knew that women of

this kind had nothing to look forward to by way of a reward at the end of their year's toil. There was no time of the year when the farmers could expect to have money enough to buy new clothes. They never had any sense of security for any of the coming years, but they had an unshakable faith in God and His mercy and kindness, which alone helped them to bear their burdens. They had one thing, and that was good health, and for this they could not thank the Almighty enough, even if they prayed all their lives twenty-four hours each day. This girl had five strapping young brothers and sisters, all handsome and strong, the sort of children whom rich people would give millions to have. Before she was married, she used to carry pitchers full of drinking water from the percolation wells outside the village for use in her house. Often the women had to bring water from good distances. They carried their pitchers on their heads, and this gave them strength and poise, and an attractive swinging gait. Both hands were always lifted to support the pitcher on the head from both sides. When the girls grew older they carried two pitchers, one on their heads and one on their right hip, their right arm

curled round the neck of the pitcher, the left arm supporting the one on the head. Still stronger women carried two pitchers on their heads and one on the side. They had to tuck up their loin-cloths fairly high, right up to their knees, so as not to stumble and fall on the way. This exercise gave the women a walk and a gait which was only rivalled by the proud carriage of a peacock, which with its neck held high was often seen making love to its ladies.

Daulat Bibi was newly married. Mrs. Lincoln could tell this the moment she cast her eyes on her. Not only because there were no children about and she was the only person working, nor because she looked young, but because of the sure index of her clothes. She was wearing garments such as the newly-wed wear. Her shoes were new ; no doubt the only pair she had, otherwise she would not have been working in them. They had a little Russian gold thread on them, but her parents could not have paid more than 8*d.* for them. Things were cheaply made in the villages. Her loin-cloth was locally made, and dyed and painted by the village washerman. The print marks on this cloth were deep red and black, circular in design, closely printed, so that no white

spaces could be seen. Every maiden wore this the first night of her marriage. Her head-covering was of muslin and was similarly dyed in red and black, but the pattern here was of flowers and trees. Her shirt went down to her knees and was light pink in colour. It had a Grecian collar with a cloth button on the left side. The sleeves were loose, with no cuffs and no buttons, and were about ten inches wide. She had dyed her finger-nails and knuckles with henna leaf paste in the fashion of all brides.

This young lady held a shovel in her hand as Mrs. Lincoln and her daughter entered her compound. The shovel was like a rake but instead of the prongs it had a wooden semi-circular piece with a sharpened edge. It was different from the ordinary drag shovels used by most farmers' wives. These were made of common, valueless woods and shaped by the village carpenter with an adze. This particular shovel was made out of hard Kaoo wood, which a friend of her father sent down from the salt range. The carpenter had turned its handle on his crude lathe. She had herself furtively noticed, while passing along the street carrying fresh water to her mother's home before her marriage, that the carpenter was turning the

lathe with a bow in his left hand, the leather string helping to create the revolutions as he pulled it backwards and forwards. With his right hand he was painting the handle with paint sticks. It was the universal rule for coy maidens to look at nothing connected with their wedding, and they were supposed to talk about it as little as possible. They were expected never to speak to their fiancées before marriage. Such a course was considered unchaste. Should he happen to come to the bride's house, she had to keep out of his way, or should he pass by where she was sitting, she was expected at least to cover her face. The carpenter treated all brides like little queens and took great pains in preparing their bridal bedsteads. In the case of Daulat Bibi, he had painted green, red and blue rings round the shovel handle. He had used the same colours on the four round legs of her bridal bedstead. He had cut these out of the dark core of a Sisoo log which lay in his courtyard, and turned them on the lathe. Where there were unpainted spots at the top, because the lathe held the two ends of each leg at these points the carpenter had placed four wooden parrots green in colour with red beaks, feet and shoulders, dark collars

and chests. People said that these were the exact images of the wild parrots they saw on the village trees.

With her shovel, Daulat Bibi was dragging out the ox-dung from the little puddles which had been formed near the hind hooves of the oxen in their open-air stalls. The oxen had already gone out ploughing. It was no use filling these pits with fresh earth or sand, for the wet of the oxen would have turned it into pools of mud. Her own father had at one time tried to make a small ditch at the back of his animals, but that did not drain off the water quickly enough and because the flies persisted in biting the animals, they lifted their legs and thumped the ground hard and made puddles all the same. The swivelling of their ears and their short necks from one side to the other, in an endeavour to drive the flies away proved of little avail. Sometimes they switched their tails, and sometimes the farmers tried to help them by lighting small heaps of smouldering fire to smoke the flies away. But all these remedies had proved of little use, and the animals when fatigued by their constant struggle in the long run always resigned themselves to their fate and lay down, dead tired, to be bitten by

the flies to their hearts' content. Like the oxen, this young farmer's wife was also resigned to her fate. She saw no way out of the daily drudgery of cleaning the open stalls. She just pulled out the dung and let it dry in the sun and pushed it back again in the evenings before the oxen came in. Winter time was better for her, for the animals were kept indoors, and no one ever cleaned the floor of these mud-built cattle sheds. The animals usually stood in six-inch deep wet manure for six months of the year. They stood or lay down in this filth until the summer came, when they were tied in the open again. The manure from the cattle sheds when dried was usually carried away by the men on borrowed donkeys. Consequently the women-folk felt happy in the winter for there was no cleaning of the ox and cow stalls. In the winter they only took that much cow dung out of the sheds as was needed for the sun-dried cakes over which they slow-boiled their milk throughout the day. These dung cakes were sometimes needed to cook food in case fuel ran short during the rains, in the winter or summer. The men liked the dung fire because it burnt slowly, and when placed on the bowls of their pipes, the tobacco lasted longer

than it did under hot cinders made out of acacia or other similar wood. Sometimes the farmers went on pulling at their pipes for so long that towards the end they could hardly distinguish between smoke of the burnt-out tobacco and the smell of the dung ashes. This fire was particularly useful when a farmer had a large number of guests for whom, according to the custom of the country, he had to provide free smokes.

As Mrs. Lincoln neared Daulat Bibi, she said to her :

“ Good morning, Daulat Bibi.”

“ Salaam, Mem Sahib.”

“ How are you ?”

“ God be thanked.”

“ Now tell me, what do you do during the course of the day ?”

This question no doubt was asked for the education of her daughter, who was accompanying her during this village round.

Daulat Bibi, who expected that the Mem Sahib would want to see her house, smiled and said :

“ We are bred and built for work, Mem Sahib. I do not grumble. Whatever is written for one from the day of his birth must hap-



pen to him, and we have to breathe the number of breaths that have been ordained for us. It is no use grumbling. Only those are entitled to grumble who, being bred in comfort like you, are forced by circumstances to earn their living with their own hands. God save the well-to-do from descent into poverty. Those who are accustomed to luxuries find it hard, but we do not mind this work. We have to work hard—one can never get anything by begging for it. We have a saying that even death does not come when you beg for it.”

“What have you done since you woke up?”

“First, I went out and washed myself, then I churned the milk. My husband had milked the cow—and I put the milk on the slow dung fire. I gave my husband some bread and a little whey. I chopped the fodder for my cow and have tied her in a clean stall—there you can see her with her calf—and I am doing what you see.”

“What will you do after this?”

“I shall cook my husband’s meal, which consists of bread, a little whey and clarified butter, and perhaps a little raw sugar—and walk over to the field with it. The field is about a

mile away from here. When I come back I shall carry on my head some more fodder for the cow. My husband when he comes home will bring the fodder for the bullock."

"Can you sew, Daulat Bibi?"

"Yes, Mem Sahib, I can sew well; my mother taught me this and I thank her for it. I am a good cook also."

Mrs. Lincoln turning round to her daughter, told her that Daulat Bibi was entirely illiterate, but it was wonderful how well informed she was. She also pointed out to her child that Daulat Bibi was a good woman, the sort that would decorate any farmer's house in any part of the world. She had been brought up to know how to bear the burden of her life with a cheerful heart, and in spite of all the difficulties she had she could smile and be happy through her allotted span of life. It was the cheerful disposition of the farmer's women which enabled them to live as happily as they did.

Having said good-bye to Daulat Bibi, Mrs. Lincoln caught hold of Marjorie's right hand in her own left, and walked into the weaver's quarters. The first courtyard she entered belonged to a woman she knew whose name was Sharfan. Her husband was working his loom a

few yards away from the main entrance of their courtyard. Sharfan was busy straightening out the yarn for the next warp. It were stretched out between two rather tall wooden pegs twenty feet apart, and as she reached the peg near the entrance—her eyes fixed on the spools which hung from both her hands at the end of two light reeds—she muttered these words: “There were a hundred under this peg also.” She winced as she saw Mrs. Lincoln but gave her a smile, the sort of smile which one gives when one is caught unawares doing something silly. She put both the spool reeds into one hand, and with the other gently scratching the top of her head, she very pleasantly presented her verbal salutations by saying: “Salaam, Mem Sahib.” By this time all the women and children belonging to the neighbouring houses had collected along the mud boundary walls, over which they were unceremoniously showing their dark heads, trying to poke their noses into the affairs of their neighbour, who had been honoured by the visit of a white woman.

“What were you saying as you stopped near the peg, Sharfan?” enquired Mrs. Lincoln.

The woman smiled again and said:

“Oh— nothing, Mem Sahib.”

A black woman, literally black by constantly exposing her face to the oven fire when pulling out baked bread, was resting her chin on her forearms and leaning on the boundary wall. She was intensely interested in all that her neighbour was up to. When Sharfan failed to answer Mrs. Lincoln's question, this woman spoke, addressing no one but in quite an audible voice :

" Oh, poor thing, she has lost Rs. 100 from underneath that peg, and that is what she was referring to, and she has lost another Rs. 100 from beneath the other peg at the other end of the warp. May the thieves go leprous and their hands and feet never work again. They have robbed a poor woman."

As she spoke these words, Mrs. Lincoln noticed her sardonic smile betraying her inner feelings, the sort of smile which people give when they make a sarcastic remark. Mrs. Lincoln also noticed that as the woman uttered the curses she lowered her voice, her tone becoming subdued and void of all pressure of a powerful will—for fear the prayer be heard if uttered vehemently.

As Sharfan heard her neighbour speak she turned her back on her and said to Mrs. Lincoln :

“That bitch and daughter of bitch knows all about our loss. She is always overhearing all conversation that takes place in this unfortunate home. May her ears be closed with molten lead. She should be dead rather than alive. The world would be all the cleaner without her. May God Almighty withdraw from her the few more breaths which are still ordained for her. May both her sons go leprous. May her prayer be heard on this subject. Every word she says is like a dagger in my heart. She was not talking to you, Mem Sahib. Every word of hers was directly addressed to me. She was talking with her tongue in her cheek.”

As Sharfan continued, her forehead knit into deeper and deeper furrows of rage, expressing an unquenched thirst for revenge. She tried to glance out of the corner of her eye to see if her hated neighbour was still listening.

“I know that woman and every movement of hers. I could read the mischief in her eyes. Oh, how I loathe the sight of that slut, Mem Sahib.”

Of course the baker woman was listening, very much interested in the conversation, which Sharfan now carried on in a whisper. But all the time she bore a look on her face resembling

that of a chess player who, having checked his opponent, sits back and says to himself : “ Now you can worry your little head for a while and be quiet.” The baker woman was deriving immense wicked joy from the quandary into which she had placed her neighbour by making a remark which had been heard by the Mem Sahib. The baker woman had done this sort of thing before, many a time. While she watched Sharfan and the Mem Sahib she was saying to herself :

“ Go on, old girl. Tell the Mem Sahib all you can. I am not afraid of her. She can do nothing to me nor to my sons. I know the law as much as any lawyer in Sargodha.”

“ You know, Mem Sahib, she knows as well as I do that my two little sons are too young to pay her back in her own coin. Oh, how I would like to see the heads of the baker woman’s sons cracked like the walnuts that I crush between two stones. Never mind, let her wait until my boys are grown up. I will teach her a lesson, a lesson that will make her grandmother bark from the bowels of the earth, where she lies eaten by filthy worms. She does not do this sort of thing to the neighbour on the other side of her house. She well remembers how she

was beaten with a shoe by the woman in that house, and as her head was slapped, she upbraided her sons and tried to persuade them to go and beat up the woman, in spite of the fact that the beating she had received was a well-deserved reward for her unbridled tongue. Her neighbour also had sturdy sons, and they gave a few knocks to her sons she had produced in fornication. That little bleeding stopped her from prying into that house for some time. She has a foul tongue, Mem Sahib. She has never uttered one good word from the day she left her mother's womb up to today. Even if you get two elephants to tear her apart she will never speak the truth. If I had the power I would cut her tongue out with a saw or with a blunt knife smelling of onions. I know, Mem Sahib, what she was hinting at. Yes, we lost money."

As she said this the corners of her mouth drooped with sorrow and anger.

"Oh, poor dear, what money?"

"My husband's younger brother was about to be married. The date had been fixed for the 15th of the next moon. We like our marriage celebrations to take place in the summer, otherwise it is not easy to provide beddings for the guests. People hate to lend beddings, for they not

only gets soiled but also stolen. We had been trying to save up money for years. Ever since my father-in-law died the two brothers had been living together and had worked together. The elder was married first, to me, with their joint earnings, and now it was the turn of the younger brother to get married. Oh, with what great difficulty I had secured a match for him, but not until I had agreed to give my own little daughter, aged three in marriage to the bride's brother's son, who is now only ten. It is not easy to find girls in this country, Mem Sahib. The father of the bride demanded Rs. 200 before he would agree to changing her clothes and allowing the marriage to be celebrated. He said that he had no money, and if we had waited until he had saved enough money to celebrate the marriage or he had succeeded in borrowing it for the purpose, the marriage might have been in danger, for it not infrequently happens in this country that girls in similar positions elope with other men, and then it is a point of honour for the man who has been jilted to murder the culprit, which causes law-suits and prosecutions and people are hanged. We did not want that sort of thing, Mem Sahib, so we had been preparing all the clothes and the bedding



and bedsteads, and buying some cooking vessels every year as our funds permitted, and at last we sold our cow and her calf and raised two hundred rupees. Last summer, when we were sleeping out in the open, the two sons of that bitch neighbour of ours, who knew all that I had been preparing by way of clothes, broke into our house from the back wall abutting on the public road, and swept our place clean of everything that had been prepared for the marriage. They took away even the silver rings for the bride's toes. They were so thorough in their pilfering that they even searched all the empty earthen pitchers which were piled up in a corner for the marriage ceremony, and from the bottom one they recovered the earrings which I had hidden there. At that time we had not got the cash. The whole village, however, knew for how much we had sold the cow, and they also knew the amount which the father-in-law was demanding. When we did receive the money, it was no secret, and our neighbour the baker woman knew all about it, perhaps as much as we did ourselves."

By this time Sharfan had persuaded the Mem Sahib to move away from the proximity

of the baker woman, and she had led her to the wall near the loom and had pulled out a bedstead under the shade, on which she invited Mrs. Lincoln and her daughter to take their seats. While doing this she continued her conversation all the time, Mrs. Lincoln being intensely interested.

“She must have been playing the eaves-dropper from behind the wall, Mem Sahib, for she knew my weakness. I talk to myself. My tongue should be cut out. I regret the day I was born. Why was I brought into this world to be such a great loss to my husband? But I can't help it, Mem Sahib, it is not my fault. When preparing the warp I must have said: “A hundred under this peg,” and she must have heard me. I, who should really be dead, buried Rs. 100 under each of these pegs. I thought no one would suspect that I had buried the money in the open. If I had buried it elsewhere, the soft earth might have betrayed the secret, but I took jolly good care to bury the money under the pegs, where the earth was loose in any case.

“Can't you do anything to have this money returned by that woman, Mem Sahib? Your

husband is a great man. He has such great powers that by writing he can send people to jail; he can write on the papers either black or white, whatever he likes. He can paint a person in any colour he likes. Oh, you don't know what powers your husband has. The tiger never knows his own great strength. This woman always tells me that nobody can touch her, not even the great Sahib. She often goes to Sargodha. She knows all the lawyers there. We all regret the day when her sons were prosecuted for the theft of a she-donkey."

"What happened then?"

"The donkey on which her sons carried fuel for her oven died. That was their means of livelihood. Without fuel they could not heat the oven, to which came all the women from the village with their dough. By way of wages she took a portion of the dough from each woman and this was one of the sources of her income. She has many sources, Mem Sahib. She is not a woman who would spend even one of her dishonest pennies on buying anything which she can get by stealing. So her sons stole a donkey belonging to her neighbour the potter. This donkey they took to a friend of theirs in another village, who also

had stolen a she-donkey, and these two stolen animals were exchanged. As her bad luck would have it, the owner by accident spotted the stolen donkey in possession of her sons, who were prosecuted by the police. But damn these lawyers, the clever ones who trip up witnesses by tricky questions and whose sole object is to bring about miscarriage of justice. They got them off, and that is where she learned all her law. She says openly that no one can touch her and she refuses to return my money. She says that under the white man's law, unless there are eye-witnesses, nobody can touch her sons, and she takes good care that when her sons go out stealing they do not carry witnesses in their pockets. They go prowling by night, when there is nobody looking. Mem Sahib, can't you do anything to have my money returned?"

"Sharfan, it is very difficult for my husband to break the law. If he did, he would be punished, he would be dismissed from his service. I am afraid he is very much law-bound, and often we have to sacrifice justice in order to obey the law. Our law stands for principles and not for persons."

"All right, Mem Sahib, if you can't have her two sons sent to jail, at least tell your husband to do this much."

"What?"

"Just ask him to have her nose cut and her pigtail cut, and have her two sons placed back to front on donkeys with their faces blackened with soot and a string of old shoes picked up from dung heaps round their necks, and let them be paraded through the streets with all the village urchins shouting that they are black thieves, black thieves. This is the way the agents of our former rulers would have acted. They would have disgraced them in the eyes of their own people, and thus stopped their rogueries. They would not have bothered about laws and procedure and evidence and courts and lawyers. They always dealt out justice, quick and cheap and that is how they kept the peace. Can't you ask your Sahib to do this much to them, or at least to turn them out from this village so that we may live in peace? Oh, Mem Sahib, our kings knew how to deal with these people."

"What does the woman do in the village?"

"She bakes bread in the summer only, because in the winter people light fires in their own

houses to warm them and on these fires, they cook their meals and bread also. Therefore in the winter she plies other trades, which are much more lucrative than bread-baking."

"Yes, what does she do? Tell me something about that."

"If I were to tell you all she does, your hair would stand on end. She is the village midwife and at child-birth she is called by everyone. She gets one rupee if it is a boy and eight annas if it is a girl. If she has a grudge against a woman she kills her by using filthy hands, so that the poor thing dies of septicæmia. On others who do not pay her well she uses dirty knives for cutting the cord, knives smelling of meat, unwashed knives, not even rubbed in sand. I would never trust her. I sent for a midwife from a neighbouring village when my children arrived. She has a grudge against me. I would not let her come into my sight."

"What else does she do?"

"In the afternoons she lights a fire in one of her open hearths, puts on it an open iron vessel, and heats some sand in it. People bring small portions of wheat, gram or maize and get it parched in the sand. This is their afternoon meal. Sometimes young farmers come too,

but generally it is the village folk who do not work in the fields and who loiter about the streets who come to her. They want to have something to do, so they go to the baker woman's parching hearth. Any day you can walk along in front of her house and you will see her shaking the long handle of the sieve, which pours the hot sand back into the pot and allows her to hand over the separated parched corn to her customer. She keeps her eyes constantly fixed on this sieve, but her tongue is working a hundred per cent. all the time. If she did not utter filth her inside would burst. It is usually the bachelors who go to her. She acts as their pimp and makes appointments for girls with their lovers through these opportunities, for she has a small indoor oven for the winter. The girls come to her later on in the evenings with their flour for baking bread. Once she took her revenge on one of her neighbours by arranging an elopement with their newly-wed daughter-in-law, who had originally been engaged to a man whom she loved, but that betrothal had been broken off for shortage of money and the girl's father had her married to a man in this village. She was unhappy. All the strangers here go to her for their bread. She is the only mean person here

who will sell bread. Her wages are always paid in flour, and she makes bread out of this and sells it to strangers, as also to the poor scholars in the mosque when they cannot raise a meal by begging. What she cannot sell thus, she sells to the moneylender for his cow. So long as he can buy things cheaply, he will do so. He does not spend money on gram, even though that is good for his cow, but he always buys this cheap bread, which dries up the cow's milk. She has also brought about many abortions. She made one woman tie boiled leaves of a certain tree on her abdomen. All bad women and bad men are her friends. Look at the money she has. She is even now wearing sixteen gold earrings in each of her ears. How I would like to tear each one of them out of her ears and cut her ears into pieces. Oh, how I would like to cut her all up into pieces the size of my nails and throw her to the ownerless pariah dogs. Then it would indeed be not a case of dust unto dust, but a bitch unto bitch, and a mongrel unto mongrel."

"I shall speak to my husband, Sharfan, about this."

"Oh, thanks, Mem Sahib. I hope he will destroy the seed of this slut and close the door of her house for ever."



All this time Marjorie was extremely interested in what the weaver was doing with his loom. She was not interested in high politics, such as her mother and Sharfan were indulging in. The weaver was ignoring the talk, for in accordance with the custom of village folk, when women talked the proper thing for men to do was to sit back and not listen. Dorothy turned round to Marjorie and said :

“Let us go, it is getting late.”

Marjorie was keen on seeing the loom. She pulled her mother towards where the man was working. His feet were dangling in the pit of his loom. The warp was spread out in the open. The loom where the man worked was only about ten square feet and the length of the warp about twenty feet. The weaver worked under a canopy which rested on three mud walls. The canopy consisted of a thatch prepared with the dry twigs of trees. The warp was composed of hand-woven thread made locally. As the weaver pushed the shuttle with his right hand his head automatically travelled in the direction in which the shuttle went. As he received the shuttle in his left hand, his head came to a dead stop with a jerk and moved to the right with the shuttle. This

amused Marjorie very much. How quickly he pulled the reed with the hand that parted with the shuttle, appeared to her as a great wonder.

While Mrs. Lincoln was going round the village Mr. Lincoln asked Sher Khan to call the headman, Khadim. Mr. Lincoln had been told by the Tehsildar the Fatta was a farmer of the village whose crops had been reserved for his inspection. He was also informed that Fatta was a rather poor man. Mr. Lincoln, wishing not to be entirely dependent on the information supplied to him by the Tehsildar and other Government servants, had sent for Khadim to secure some independent opinion and first-hand information. Sher Khan brought the headman, but the latter did not know why he had been sent for in that informal manner. On his arrival at the camp, Khadim was led into the drawing room tent where Mr. Lincoln sat on an easy chair. It was not a formal interview, so it took place in privacy, which the visitor greatly appreciated. Khadim seated himself on the carpet beside Mr. Lincoln and looked rather bewildered and anxious to know what the matter was. Mr. Lincoln put his

anxiety at rest by asking him whether Fatta was really as poor and as miserable as the Tehsildar had made him out to be. The Sahib wanted to know the truth before he went out crop-inspecting.

It was customary for all headmen to present to Government officers as good and rosy a picture of things as they possibly could, except in cases where their own pockets were concerned ; in the latter case they refrained from exaggerating things in favour of or against the farmers.

The moment the headman heard Mr. Lincoln's question, he leaned back and heaved a sigh of relief. He put his hand upon his heart and told the Sahib that he had nearly fainted with the fright of the sudden call so late in the evening.

" Yes, Sir, he is poor."

" But are all the farmers as poor as Fatta ?"

" No farmer is rich, Sir."

" Then how can they pay their tax and feed themselves ? I have taken very careful account of Fatta's income and expenditure as shown to me on paper and have come to the conclusion that he slaves the whole year round for nothing."

“ Since you are so kind-hearted, I shall be frank with you, Sir, I have never talked like this to any officer before.”

“ Thank you, Khadim. Go on.”

“ We farmers are not really quite so badly off as we make ourselves out to be. But we are poor all the same. No farmer in the world is ever contented, no matter what his country. No man has ever paid a tax ungrudgingly. Take any farmer and write on paper his income and expenditure, you will never find a single man whose income exceeds his expenditure. Yet we farmers continue to exist from year to year. We are tough nuts.”

“ That is all very well, but I cannot understand how the farmer can pay his tax and have something to eat at the same time.”

“ Look here, Sahib, I shall be frank with you. My wife's brother has six acres of land. He sowed cotton in two, wheat in two and fodder in two. Out of the fodder he sold one quarter of an acre at Rs. 20 per kanal—there are nine kanals to the acre. This brought him Rs. 45. His total land tax for his six acres throughout the year was Rs. 48. So he had practically the whole of the wheat and cotton for himself and his family. His outturn of wheat and

cotton was the same as that of Fatta and my brother-in-law and his family did not earn more than a penny per head per day but they did not starve. They just managed to scrape through the year with their own corn. We are all poor. He also sold an old cow for Rs. 50."

"How can you get so much money for the green fodder crop? It amounts to Rs. 180 per acre."

"No zamindar would hesitate to sell all his crops as green fodder, but he can't because the demand is limited. No farmer can pay this price. The fodder is all bought either by village menials, who are really better off than the farmers, or by moneylenders who can afford to pay. We make them pay through the nose. No farmer sells fodder to a shopkeeper to whom he owes money. For him the polite answer always is; 'Extremely sorry, I have no fodder to spare,' but when another shopkeeper comes along he can buy as much as he likes, and we always insist on cash payment in advance. Who is there in the village who can exist, without owning a milch cow, and which cow does not need fodder all the year round? Trickery and cunning is not an exclusive attribute of the moneylender. We farmers take a lot of beat-

ing in these matters. We are not quite so simple as we appear to be. We never pay anything substantial to the moneylender. He always dies counting debts due to him. The more starved he is the more vigorously he turns over the leaves of his account books. Haven't you heard the saying: 'Jat harami khuda ko chor le gai'—when a cunning farmer does not want to speak the truth he pretends that God has been stolen by thieves. (May God pardon me for repeating this.)"

"Then why is Fatta so badly off? He also has six acres of land like your brother-in-law."

"There will always be some border-line cases. If all the farmers were as poor as Fatta, how could we grow such a fine race of Punjabee men as we do? How could you find the handsome and strapping youths to fill your regiments if all farmers were as starved as Fatta? His is a peculiarly unfortunate case. His father left him a very heavy debt. Like an honest man but a fool, he took over his father's debt when the latter passed away. Ever since, he has been unable to get out of the moneylender's clutches."

"Are the moneylenders then very rich?"

"Not all of them, Sir. If you wish to know the truth, we all seem to live on each other's

washing. This chap Gobind, who is one of the richest moneylenders in these parts, could not produce Rs. 100 cash from his house if he wanted it to-day."

"Why not?"

"The paper debts he owns probably amount to nearly Rs. 200,000. But that is all. He has the satisfaction of making entries of accumulating interest in his books, but he never will realise all that money. His richness depends on the farmers. All that belongs to him is what he gets every year by way of a little corn here and there, some fodder and perhaps a milch cow or so. All animals or corn or cash which he receives from his debtors he passes on to other debtors as fresh loans and they more often than not eat the animals and report to him that they have been stolen. He shares our poverty with us. He need not if he were not so greedy and keen on reinvestment and accumulating more wealth. Some of them are now stopping to so reinvest and are putting money in town shops. These are quite well-off. The moneylender is our parasite, but he has developed his profession into a fine art."

"Yes, Khadim, we have human parasites in England too; people who know how to drink

wine and smoke cigars in great style, men who are excellent conversationalists. They get invitations to dinners everywhere. People can't do without them."

"The same is the case with the moneylender, Sir. He gets no more than his bare living. The rest is all paper transaction. If the farmer ever attempted to pay the debts which are due to the moneylender in India he could not do so even if he had all the gold and silver of the world. We don't intend to pay those debts. So please don't worry yourself on that score either. Sahib, you are very kind-hearted. You should become a farmer for a year or two, then you would not have any difficulty with sleeping all night."

"Thank you very much, Khadim, for telling me so much. You have put my mind at ease."

"Please, Sir, do not use in your official reports any of the information I have given you to-night as a friend."

"I shall not, Khadim, you may rest assured. Good-bye, and again thank you."

"The moneylender goes into litigation, Sir, in very rare cases, and that only when he falls out with his debtor. His reputation for fair dealing is his great asset. Ordinarily he avoids law courts not only because of heavy court fees



and lawyers' costs but also because even if he were to secure a decree in his favour he would have little prospect of realizing his debt. The farmers have nothing which can be auctioned. Salaam Sahib."

## CHAPTER IV

Lincoln had been several days at Jamalpur and had examined all the records prepared by the Tehsildar. He felt it was time he got out into the fields.

Early one morning having kissed his daughter good-bye he set out for the village field inspection. He was followed by his staff, all riding on ponies, some of which had been borrowed from the money-lenders of the neighbouring villages. Each moneylender had to keep a pony. There was no other means of bringing his wares from the market towns to the village. The animals were usually small but hardy. They not only brought the bundles of wares, but also carried the *banias*, who perched themselves on the top of the bags suspended on either side of their unfortunate little mounts. As Lincoln was riding through the village he noticed a woman sitting on the ground and drying little black seeds on a mattress made out of date palm leaves. He turned round to the Tehsildar, who was riding by his side, and asked him what the seeds were.

"They are the seeds of the water-melon, Sir."

"What is she drying them for?"

"When dried and pounded up and mixed with raw sugar they make very good food. They are supposed to be very nourishing and children eat them. At the previous settlement your predecessor took this into consideration when fixing the net income from each acre of land. You will notice that there is some rind lying about near the woman. It is quite green and cattle can be fed on it. They relish it enormously. The inside of the water melon has already been eaten by human beings. It is full of water and cleanses the system. It is supposed to be very good for cooling the liver and driving the heat out of it. This fruit only grows in the summer. Nature provides these people each season with the kinds of fruit they need most."

"Isn't that rather going into petty details? To count the value of melons when appraising the value of crops seems mean. Why can't the poor farmer grow a few melons and eat them without having to pay a portion of the crop by way of land tax to the State?"

The Tehsildar, slave of traditions and customs of subordinate officers, who never wish to

disagree with their superiors, immediately altered the trend of his remarks.

“You are quite right, Sir. After all, these are very poor people and they do not sell the melons. They grow them on the boundary mounds of their fields. They only eat them or perhaps give one or two to their friends, but not often, and you will notice that their cattle are not over-fed. If their animals eat a little of the rind they are not doing much damage to the Sircar’s finances.”

“I do not agree with your argument, Tehsildar, although I heartily approve of the object you have in view.”

Lincoln often liked to indulge in pleasantries with his subordinates and enjoyed placing them in quandaries.

“What do you mean, Sir?”

“Suppose a man eats all the wheat that he grows; would that mean that the land from which the wheat was produced should not be taxed at all? After all, your argument amounts to nothing but this, that since the farmer eats the melons, therefore he should not be taxed for them. I am afraid that if I left out of consideration things which the farmers eat and which my predecessor mentioned in his report

as constituting the various items of income from land, my superior officers would think that I was inefficient."

"My fault, of course, I had not thought of it that way. After all, it is not possible for everyone to think quite so deeply and far ahead as you do, Sir. We have a saying that, 'There is always room for a teacher.'—Bazurgi Ba Aqal Ast Nah Ba Sal—'Wisdom goes not in accordance with the years of a man's age but in accordance with what God has put into his head' is a good old Persian saying. I must confess that I had failed to see this very minute aspect of a delicate problem."

On the whole it was a very prosperous agricultural area. People could grow gram, wheat, barley, oats in the winter, cotton in the summer, as also maize and certain millets like jawar. For fodder people grew Lucerne grass, clover turnips and millets. Sugar-cane grew in the winter but needed a great deal of watching and manuring. The land tax and water charge were twice as heavy on sugar-cane and fruit trees as they were on other crops. In the winter one could see miles and miles of green wheat fields and in the summer unending areas full of this cotton crop. Jamalpur had a rainfall of about

25 inches in the year, the same as London but the Jamalpur rain fell during ten or twelve days in July and August and two or three days in December and February. For the rest of the year villages had beautiful sunshine. The canal water was also available like the sunshine all the year round.

As they rode out of the village they saw a group of people gathered in a field. Lincoln and his staff gradually moved towards them. The wheat had been recently cut and its stubble made a crunching noise as the horses walked through the fields, till they reached the land which belonged to the farmer Fatta. He owned six acres of canal-irrigated land, an area which was really a little above the average holding of farmers in the Province. This had been selected by the Tehsildar as one of the test cases. The land had been kept under strict supervision for the whole year. The farmer had done the proper ploughing and seed had been selected with the advice of the Agricultural Officers. The crop had been carefully watched, gathered and threshed under official supervision. Over each heap of grain had been placed seals; not seals like those used by the Sahib in his office, but the seals which were used by all landowners

who shared their crops with their tenants in order to prevent the grain from being pilfered in their absence. The usual custom was for them to get a small wooden disc, four inches in diameter, on which were engraved certain words, and this disc was placed by way of a seal on a handful of soft wet sand and earth mixed, and placed on the grain heap—on all sides. The Tchsildar noticed that these seals were absolutely intact and the farmer had not interfered with the quantity of grain that had been garnered from the fields.

Mr. Lincoln was informed that Fatta had a wife and three children, all under eight years of age, who were very useful in looking after his cattle, and protecting his crops against stray cattle and swarms of sparrows.

The farmer had during the course of the year planted two acres of cotton, two of wheat and two of fodder for his cattle. Out of the cotton crop which he had gathered in the previous December and January he had picked about eight maunds of seed cotton per acre. The total amount of his cotton was sold for Rs. 56. He had paid a good portion of this cotton by way of customary remuneration to the carpenter who kept his yoke and plough in working

order during the season, the blacksmith who had beaten and sharpened his ploughshare every evening, and the weaver who had spun some cloth for him and his family. His land revenue as a whole due to the State was Rs. 4 an acre, amounting to Rs. 24 in the year. The fodder was all eaten by the cattle; therefore cotton was hardly sufficient to pay his liabilities to the village menials and to the Government. The wheat that had been gathered from the two acres was now under seal, and in the presence of Mr. Lincoln it was measured with wooden bowls called *topas*, each containing about two pounds of wheat. The village shopkeeper, in this case Gobind, did the measuring and was well paid for it. A little bit of this wheat had to be given to all the village menials also. They expected some remuneration every six months with each crop. There were a few beggars hanging about, including the village minstrel and they had to be tipped a little. The production of these two acres was only eight maunds per acre. The price being Rs. 3 a maund, the total value of the crop amounted to Rs. 48. During the year one of the bullocks had died and Fatta had borrowed Rs. 20 from the moneylender at the rate of fifty per



cent. compound interest. He could not afford to displease the moneylender, with the consequence that whatever grain was left on the threshing floor, was put into bags and loaded on the back of the donkeys belonging to the village potter which the moneylender had brought with him. The whole wheat was carried away to his shop in the village in part payment of his debt; in fact, it was hardly sufficient to cover the interest that had accrued during the year. The poor farmer and his wife walked back to their home empty-handed. On the way their six-year old boy, who had no clothes except a torn cotton shirt, said to his mother :

“ Mother, I am hungry, I want to eat.”

“ What would you like to eat ?”

“ Anything, mother.”

“ Well, you can eat your mother’s head.”

The poor creature felt crushed under the cruel remark. It came from a quarter from where sympathy was expected. The cruelty of it sent tears flowing out of his dear little eyes. His mother’s heart was bleeding. She had no tears left in her eyes. A whole year’s toil had produced no result. On the day of harvest gathering they were walking home hungry and

no food awaited them at home. One could not blame the mother for her stony heart. The inexorable laws of nature were at work. Starvation had not only destroyed all feelings of sympathy and kindness, but had also obliterated all vestiges of the tenderness of a mother's love. As they reached home, Fatta sat on a bedstead, feet dangling, his elbows on his knees and his chin resting on his palms. His wife sat beside him on a low stool in a similar posture. Children walked about whimpering. Their hearth was cold. She had thought of feeding her family on the bread made out of the corn their father had grown. But the corn went into the moneylender's shop.

Their neighbour's wife looked over the wall, for there was dead silence in Fatta's courtyard. It had happened like this the previous year at the same time. She wrapped up the few crumbs she had put away for her own children for the next morning, walked in and without uttering a word left the bread on the bed near Fatta. The children picked this up and started to eat it. Fatta and his wife did not say a word of thanks, but their neighbour knew that every hair on their body was thanking her for the hospitality. "Aunt Alee is kind, Mother, isn't she? She

gave us bread like this last year too." "Yes, my life" answered the mother, as she lay down on her bedstead, too tired to go in and fetch a pillow for herself. The children climbed on the same bed and were soon asleep.

As things were explained to Lincoln and he saw so much with his own eyes, his heart melted with pity and sorrow for the poor farmer. He realised that on the whole the farmer was not even paid for the labour that he put into the soil. He had slaved the whole year round without any remuneration at all. Fatta was less unfortunate than some, because he owned the whole of the land and the crop. There were thousands of tenants who were only entitled to take away half of the crop, the other half went to the land-owner. The result was that the condition of the land-owners sharing crops with their tenants was far worse than the condition of those who owned and cultivated the fields. Lincoln was told by the Tehsildar that that very evening, Fatta and his wife would have to go to the moneylender to borrow wheat at heavy rates of compound interest for the evening's meal. Such was the drudgery that Providence had ordained for them throughout the centuries. They submitted to their

fate with a resignation bordering on despair. But they had learned how to be contented because their contentment was the contentment of the poor who were faced with poverty generation after generation, and their only solace was that they felt it must have been the will of God that they were born in those circumstances—to work for little or nothing. About sunset the mosque was full of farmers with tattered clothes and famished faces raising their hands to the Almighty and thanking Him for His blessings and making only one appeal: “Oh God, may You and Your Friend the Holy Prophet remain pleased with us.” Among these could be heard Fatta saying loudly: “I beseech Thee, Oh Lord, to give me Your protection and Your succour. In Your will lies my pleasure. Wherever I turn there is none but Thee. A million thanks for Thy thousand-and-one blessings I enjoy. If it is Thy will that I shall remain poor I am happy in the thought that I am what I am because it is Thy Will. How do I know that it is not a great mercy on Thy part to have made me poor? Is my heart not drawn near to Thee because I am poor? If I were rich I might never have thought of Thee. The very

fact that my poverty draws me near to Thee makes that poverty a blessing to me. Keep me under Thy guidance. This world is but a passing phase. All my worries will pass one day and the day of perfect peace will dawn. May Thy peace rest with the Holy Prophet and my prayer be heard."

For the next year's seed Fatta had to go to the moneylender; for land tax he always went to the moneylender too, and whatever cotton he had he handed over to the same gentleman. As a matter of fact, Fatta was an absolute slave in the hands of the moneylender. He and his family worked day and night for him, and at the end of the year, they had nothing to show for what they had done. The moneylender could not afford to let him go under. If Fatta lived, the debt lived.

With all the goodwill in the world it was not possible for Lincoln to refuse to assess the village to a certain amount of land tax, for the villagers had paid this tax for hundreds of years and every government had depended on it for the payment of the salaries of government servants. There was no other tax in the country at all worth mentioning. Eight-tenths of the provincial Government's money came half from

land revenue and half from canal water rates paid by the farmers, one-tenth came from excise revenue on liquor, and another one-tenth from court fees and stamp duty which also fell on the farmers and the debtors.

But if there were no land revenue there would be no courts of justice, no hospitals, no roads, no police. This land tax was the price which the villager paid for peace and security. The price was heavy, but it was worth the peace. Without this peace it was not quite certain whether or not he would be able to keep his land, his cattle, his home or his honour. It was a tax to which all governments resorted all over the world. It was easy of collection. The Indian farmer suffered along with the farmers all over the world. This was his only consolation.

Lincoln consequently followed the example of all previous Settlement Officers in assessing the tax on this particular village. He decided that out of the wheat worth Rs. 48 half could be kept by the farmer as a cultivating tenant by way of his wages and remuneration. Out of the other half Government were theoretically entitled to fifty per cent. as land tax, but as a special case he decided to charge thirty-three

per cent. which was about Rs. 8. This spread over two acres came to Rs. 4 per acre, which meant that whatever was fixed at the previous settlement was a fair tax and that he did not increase the assessment of this village, for it was not justified by the prices of crops nor by the out-turn per acre. Ordinarily every Settlement Officer tried to enhance the income of the Sircar from land revenue in each district when re-assessed, but Lincoln was very conscientious and honest and he could not persuade himself to believe that the farmer was getting any more money out of the land now than he did forty years previously. If Lincoln had the power, he would have liked to have reduced the tax, but such a recommendation would have met with great disapproval higher up; therefore he took the line of least resistance—he did not wish to be unfair to the farmers, and consequently he decided to recommend that the land revenue chargeable from Jamalpur should be the same as was fixed previously. He realised that the total income of the farmer from cotton and from wheat was only Rs. 104 in the year. That was the gross income, entirely disregarding his wages and the wages of his family as labourers. He worked out in his own mind

that even if all the five souls in the family had earned one penny a day the average income from wages in the year would have been more than this and would have amounted to Rs. 114.

Even though Lincoln was satisfied that it was no use bothering his head any more about the assessment, for he was quite clear from the inspection of that very first field that the tax on the village could not be increased, still in accordance with the custom that prevailed in all the districts where settlements were being carried out, he went round and saw all the fields that had been reserved for his inspection. He undertook the task of going into great detail in assessing the net assets of each acre of land owned by the various farmers. He had to suggest a different tax for each crop, because their values differed and therefore the tax to be collected by the Sircar must also differ. This was in a way more fair than a rigid tax such as prevailed in some other countries, *e.g.*, Canada where every farmer paid about Rs. 4 per acre per annum whether there was a crop or not. In India the farmer paid according to what he grew, and if nothing grew he paid nothing. This system, however, militated



against the raising of valuable crops like fruit, because the Government took away half the landlord's income, while he had to bear all the extra cost of raising the valuable crop.

As Lincoln rode back to his tent, in his mind was constantly present the spectacle of Fatta and his wife walking away with downcast heads, pale faces, torn and dirty clothes, wending their way home empty-handed after a year's endless toil and fatigue, their children underfed. His Christian spirit was moved. How could he recommend taking away from people who had nothing to give and who were already starved? Every man who owned land had to pay, whether he owned one acre or twenty-thousand acres. The rate of tax per acre was the same. He made up his mind definitely after this visit to go up to Lahore and speak to the higher authorities about the real conditions prevailing in the villages. He resolved to suggest to them that the smaller landholders should not be taxed at all and that the bigger landowners should be made to pay more, and also that moneylending should be controlled. It was his definite opinion that rates of interest which a moneylender could charge should also be fixed and the farmer given necessary protection

in order to ensure him at least a living wage for himself and his family. Mr. Lincoln was determined to suggest that the money-lenders in the villages should be made to pay some sort of a tax. At the moment they were paying not a penny and they were the richest people in the whole countryside. They were living on the fat of the land and using the farmers as their slaves and toilers, keeping double account books and hiding their real income.

He also had this satisfaction, that the Sircar was not putting any new burden on the people, and that the peasants were only being charged what they had paid from times immemorial. The Moguls had charged land tax for centuries in the past, and perhaps their agents who collected these taxes had no one to control their lawless plundering of the farmer. He also realised that the average holding in the Province was only four acres and if the smaller holdings were exempted from this tax the bigger landowners could not be expected to pay sufficient money to run the administrative machinery. He recalled to mind a report which he had drawn up regarding economy by way of modifying the salaries of highly-paid officials. The Committee which investigated the matter

reported that seventy-five per cent. of the money spent on salaries of persons paid from Government Treasuries went to officers who drew Rs. 100 a month or less. In his opinion, the only way of increasing the purchasing power of the country was to have more industries.

There was, however, one thing that Lincoln could do for the farmer, and that was to frame elaborate rules for the remission of land tax in case of failure of crops due to drought, hail-storms, locusts and other pests. This he did in a most generous manner. He had also realised that in order to get the full benefit of these rules the villager depended almost entirely on the mercy of the village record-keeper, and this gentleman was well known throughout the Province to be a person whose palm must be greased heavily throughout the year in each village. Before he could be persuaded to recommend a remission of land revenue he always asked the farmers to pay him in advance his share of any revenue remission which would become due if his recommendation were accepted. It was not possible for the farmers to go to the District Headquarters in order to put their claims before

higher authority against the decisions of the village record-keeper, because railway journeys were always expensive, and they found it cheaper to tip the *patwari* than to go up to higher officers.

Lincoln had been nearly three weeks at Jamalpur but he had to stop one night more to see the inter-district Pirkaudi match, which was to take place the following morning. It was the final day of the three-day fair at a Jamalpur mausoleum, and Lincoln was to give away the prizes.

Next day when Lincoln arrived on the scene, the country fair was already in full swing. It was being held on the Jamalpur common land, only a quarter mile away from the village. Men were moving about and singing broad songs. Within the limits of the fair ground visitors could be seen surging in waves from one side to the other without any set purpose or destination. This fair was organised every year by the custodians of the mausoleum of a spiritual preceptor called Mian Raula, who was buried near Jamalpur. It was famous as the abode of the *choohas* of Mian Raula ('rats of Mian Raula'). These were freaks of nature, with miniature conical heads, ears like rats and

bodies fully grown. These 'rats' were of all ages, young and old. The country-folk, wearied of their dreary village life, were always glad to find a diversion from their customary drudgery, even though it were through a visit to this house of human rats. The custodians always arranged with shopkeepers from all the villages in the neighbourhood to open sweetmeat snops on the fair ground. On this particular day in the year all the young village lads took a few coppers from their mothers—after a good deal of chivying—and made a point of attending the fair and buying sweets, perhaps because this was the only chance they had of tasting a sweet thing. Some borrowed money to get to this fair, but every young lad must go, not only because of the sweets, but also because of the other entertainments, including the Pirkaudi matches.

There could be seen scattered about over the fair area groups of young men, five or six strong, usually all belonging to the same village. Some could be seen playing the flute, made of hollow bamboo sticks, and others beating copper plates with their heavily ringed fingers, and yet a larger number clapping loudly in accompaniment of the song which their leaders were singing. This music combined beautifully

in a rustic rhythm. These singing parties attracted the attention of passers-by and a large number of stray youths were quite glad to join one group or another. Their songs were of varying qualities and kinds, but they were mostly sentimental and a great many of them were obscene. The first line that the leader sang—'You went to the fair with a necklace round your neck'—was usually meaningless; the group sang the next line, which was in nine cases out of ten not fit for the ears of young maidens, but luckily there were practically no women to be seen on the fair ground. The frenzy of the young men singing these songs grew stronger and stronger as they went on singing, telling each other what they would do in certain circumstances which they had not had the good fortune to experience up to that time.

At the eastern end of the fair ground there were a few shady trees all in a cluster. Under their shade there was quite a crowd standing in a small circle. More would have joined in but that it was no longer possible for any of the newcomers to look over the heads of the spectators to see what was happening inside this human barrier.

A landed aristocrat of the Gujrat District had suddenly become rich. He owned ten thousand acres of barren land which became valuable overnight when it received irrigation from the Upper Jhelum Canal. He was fond of cattle, and women and wine received a proper share of his attention and patronage. He was very popular with the country folk for he often arranged sports competitions and gave liberal stipends to all widows living in his district. His eldest son had been recently married, and this had given him a very legitimate excuse for bringing one of his girl friends from Lahore to give a Nauch party to entertain his guests. Miss Mehboob Jan had demanded, and very willingly been granted, a fee of Rs. 500 per day for herself and her troupe of musicians, in addition to their travelling expenses and free board and lodging in the village. This aristocrat had known Mehboob Jan for years; in fact, she grew up "in his hands" as a Punjab proverb goes. He had been a constant patron of this family for a long time, and when Mehboob Jan came of age the family naturally invited the wealthiest of their customers to perform the nose-ring opening ceremony. Among all the private brothels it was a well recognised custom that the

young girls wore a nose-ring of gold or of silver. This was their virginal passport. The brothels in Lahore were private brothels. The brothel-keeper lived on the earnings of his wife, daughters and daughters-in-law. The European system of brothels did not exist in Lahore. No women ever volunteered to live in other people's houses. They always tried to benefit their own relations.

The nose-ring was removed on initiation into the profession. The honour of being the first customer was always conferred on the best patron. This landed aristocrat had paid a thousand rupees for performing the nose-ring removal ceremony, thus receiving the unique distinction of launching Mehboob Jan on her public career.

The art of music had been confined to these families of private brothel-keepers for generations past in Lahore. They had produced some of the most famous singers of India. It was because of the association of music with these houses of ill-fame that no respectable person could allow his daughter to learn music—an art which was a special preserve of girls with bad character. It was not till their association with the white man and his women that the Indian gentry realised that music could be



learnt by daughters of the most respectable families without any sense of shame. Although theoretically music had been admitted as something respectable, yet there were very few families who had the courage of their convictions and could break the ice. But a start had been made. Singing was a special preserve of the brothel-keepers and all music had passed orally from father to son, generation after generation. As a matter of fact, no written music existed at all and in the beginning daughters of the gentry were forced to learn music from men whose company was considered indecent.

There was Mahboob Jan dressed in her gaudy clothes with gold lace all over her skirt, bodice and *ulla* (head cover). The last was of thin muslin cloth with gold thread woven in, an art for which Benares had been famous for ages past. She stood in the middle of the congregation singing love songs ; with her stood her musicians, one playing the *sarangi* and the other a pair of drums which rested on a cloth belt in front of his abdomen. There was a young boy holding a spittoon into which she occasionally spat to get rid of the betel-nut leaf with which one of her cheeks was bulging. Her singing was exquisite, and to show their appreciation

the squires standing round threw her rupee coins, which she picked up instantly by making a break in her song. The aristocrat who had brought her there sat on a bedstead; all the others stood round except one or two of his closest friends who had the honour of sitting on his bedstead. Behind him stood his confidential servants with a flask full of a cold drink.

The wife of this squire had once followed him to Lahore and stealthily gone up the steps of the house where her husband was well known to go every evening. As she climbed up, she heard the angry voice of a woman scolding her husband and saying: "You son of a donkey, why are you late?" and then she beat him on the head with her slipper. He was very apologetic and promised to be punctual in the future. His wife quietly climbed down the steps unnoticed and went home. When the old boy came back she took off her slipper and beat him and said: "You son of a donkey, what have you been up to in Lahore?" The man smiled and said: "Why did you not do this before? I would never have gone astray." That was the turning point in his life.

Mehboob Jan was singing her songs in the morning mode, for according to Indian tradition

the musical modes varied with the time of the day. The modes for the morning (*bhairvi*), mid-day (*piloo*), evening (*kalyan*), and late night (*bihag* and *malkaus*), were all different.

Just outside this seven or eight deep ring of spectators stood Ali. With him were his village friends dressed in loin cloths and long shirts, but they had never been to school. Ali was not spoilt in spite of his education and he mixed with the young men of the village on equal terms and dressed like them on occasions such as this. They all adored him and accepted him as their leader. In his father's club house there gathered a large crowd of young men every evening, and Ali told them what Lahore was like, and he also described to them what Europe was like and how the voice of the people was supreme in the West. He had read of Western democracy and freedom, and inspired the youth of his village with a new spirit of discontentment and ambition.

As Ali stood behind the spectators of the Nauch party he lectured to his young friends on the evils of brothels, and severely criticised the older generation of the gentry for their wasteful ways of living, and told his admirers that if he were ever elected a member of the Punjab

Parliament he would lose no time in moving bills for the suppression of houses of ill-fame and taxing the richer people to such an extent that they would have no money to waste.

There were stray women about the fair ground, but these were bakerwomen, and among these was the one from Jamalpur, who always found that such fairs afforded her an excellent opportunity to chop up old donkeys and buffaloes and sell them to the hungry villagers as mutton or goat's meat.

On the fair ground could be seen a circus. It consisted of a black bear whose teeth had been extracted, two monkeys, and a goat. Their performance particularly the wrestling match between the bear and its trainer, amused the people. The bear was harmless for its claws had also been clipped away. The people roared with laughter when the trainer asked the monkey seated on a wooden stool throne; "Do you wish to become the King of the Punjab?" and the monkey shook his head in the negative. There were also fixed a few matches between battering rams. The dog fights had not been held of late, for the police had interfered and stopped them.

In this jostling and throbbing crowd there was a man walking slowly up and down carrying

on his shoulders a young boy of about twelve belonging to the colony of 'human rats.' This boy was riding on the man's shoulders and holding on to his head with both hands. His own little head was closely shaven in order to make prominent more than ever, his deformity, which was his sole means of inspiring awe and respect in the minds of the simple village folk. These 'rats' were considered by the people to be possessed of superhuman powers, and their incoherent and imbecile talk, uttered during a natural stupor, was accepted as a sign of their living in continuous spiritual trances.

This particular docile boy 'rat' was well tutored by his guardian, who served for the moment as his mount. As ordered, he was shouting in his husky voice, husky because of continual shouting; "Clear out of my way, else I will shove you down into the bowels of the earth." He had been told to speak in a deep and slow tone, and from constantly imitating men's voices this boy had become pitifully hoarse. He was trying to impress on the simple village folk his supernatural powers of being able to destroy men should they not move out of his way and make room for the man who carried him. The fact

that he could hardly be heard was of no consequence, for the chief object was to inspire awe in the hearts of passers-by. The custodians of this mausoleum wanted to frighten the village people into buying their peace from the All-powerful, Awe-inspiring Almighty by means of offerings at this particular shrine. They had always tried to create the impression that the boy 'rat' was really a mouth-piece of God Almighty, and whatever he uttered always came true.

One of the farmer boys in this crowd happened quite unintentionally to knock against the man who was carrying the 'rat'. Every one gasped with fright at the dire consequences which they feared might immediately follow. It so happened that this young man was by accident, a little later, seriously gored by one of the District Board stallion bulls. These bulls were the property of the Sircar and were permitted to roam about the villages covering the cows free of charge. That morning the offerings at the shrine were manifold, for everybody felt that it was the curse of the boy 'rat' which had led to the fracture of so many of the ribs of the young man. Thereafter, wherever this 'rat' went, people ran out of his way, for the efficacy of his curse stood proved beyond doubt.

One of the sweetmeat shops at the fair had been looted by some young rowdies, but the headman of the village to which the shopkeeper belonged had the culprits captured with the help of other headmen who were present on the ground. Even though the shopkeeper was a Hindu moneylender, for whom the villagers felt no sympathy whatsoever, it was a point of honour for the headman that no one belonging to his village should be molested and the crime go unpunished. The quarrel nearly reached riot point, but eventually the boys concerned paid up and there was peace. No alcohol was sold at the fair because the population all belonged to a Moslem area, for whom drink was forbidden, but the fire and intoxication of youth supplied all that might have been lacking in the absence of alcohol. All the people wore gaudy clothes. There were men on camels among the crowd, and the dust rose sky-high. Amongst them was seen Maman the Truthful, and people pointed their fingers at him, telling each other in whispers that he was the man who went to abduct a married woman fifty miles away from his home, and when they were eloping on the back of a camel he stopped under a tree at midday, saying to himself: "If

this woman has been unfaithful to the other man, she will be unfaithful to me." He there-upon put her back on the camel and turned round and dropped her outside her own village and went home. People also pointed at Tulsher Khan, who was the best horseman of the District, and who had trained horses to walk on their hind legs and salute the high officials when they came to the District. His horses could walk like goats on narrow beams no wider than five inches. Some people were seen riding about in bullock carts. Many of those who visited the fair had to travel forty or fifty miles on foot, and had to spend a night by the roadside under the trees.

These were the Pirkaudi fans. There was to be a Pirkaudi match between the adjoining districts of Shahpur and Gujrat. This was a return match. During the previous year, Gujrat had been beaten all along the line from the top teams down to the young budding couples. This was a match in which the leading teams were expected to fight like fury. There had been occasions before when actual battles royal had taken place; consequently all the spectators came armed with bamboo sticks, whether to use them in self-defence or to wield them in



vindication of their protest that the opposing side had fouled, was beside the point. A dog fight or individual scraps could always be expected whenever one of the contestants fouled by breaking backwards in between his two chasers, when it was quite customary for one of the audience to rush out calling him 'son of a jackal' and hitting him on the head for being a spoil-sport and a coward. Occasionally a player would rub hard a fallen foe and this again would be a legitimate cause for someone to rush out and hit him for being hard on an already fallen and vanquished enemy.

These cudgel fights were considered part of the fun and in their absence the game was considered to have fallen flat. These occasional cracks had never proved a hindrance in the way of large gatherings at subsequent meetings.

Pirkaudi was a sport come down probably from the old Indo-Aryan civilisation, which in its heyday of Vedic glory was the pride of a pastoral people living in north-western India—the modern Punjab, the rich land of the deltas of the five rivers. Their chief source of wealth was their cattle, and among these the cow and the ox were most valuable. A man's worst enemy was he who stole his cow, so the Aryan

word for 'enemy' and 'cow-stealer' was the same. The word for the honoured guest was 'ghogna,' which meant a man for whose welcome a cow was always slaughtered. The chief source of anxiety for all was the protection of their cattle against the depredation of cattle lifters. If a man's cattle were stolen he was honour-bound to revenge himself by stealing the cattle belonging to his thief. Therefore the art of catching thieves and of escaping from pursuers was one of the main achievements of a young man's career. The game of Pirkaudi had been invented to practice this art, which the persistence of cattle-lifting in the Punjab villages throughout the ages had turned into a national sport. In this game one man runs in front and two try to catch him. Each man has to be chased thrice. Two teams of two a side means nine runs for each player. This sport needs not only great muscle and speed but also stamina and skill. The ground is usually hard as wood and if men are to escape injury from their falls they must have bodies like steel.

This year's match had been widely known by the advertisement of the fact that Ali and a butcher boy of Hamoka village were again contesting for Shahpur. The butcher boy had

throughout the winter been supplied gratis with tins of clarified butter by his village chieftain. This was intended to make him strong. Their reserve man was a small-sized schoolmaster who was famous, province wide, for the iron grip of his hand and his unmatched speed. The villagers said that his grip was like a police officer's handcuffs ; once clapped on, it never came off. The Gujrat team were two Khokars who were as famous and as well fed as the Shahpur champions. There was no prize money, the victory and its glory were all that the players aspired to achieve. Bringing honour to their district, their villages and their supporters was their main aim.

The couples who had fixed matches with their opponents to be played out on this annual festival were of all ages and of varying standards and reputations. The extent of the attention and quietness of the crowd, which contained not a single woman, depended entirely on the fame of the players that were out in the arena. When the leading contestants were playing, the whole crowd without the aid of any binoculars recognised them immediately and became instantly silent. There were about twenty couples on each side. All were strong young

men, the pick of each district, mostly six feet high, strong, healthy, strapping youths, their bodies supple and their gait dignified. Their only garments were a small head dress of one yard of pure white, well-starched muslin, its ends sticking up like the comb of a proud cock, and a jockey strap, the smallest of its kind. Their oblong heads and dark long hair cut across the neck in a cape crop in the Grecian fashion, betrayed the origin of this coiffure with the followers of Alexander who had settled in the Punjab and ruled the Province from their capital at Taxila for nearly three hundred years about 300 B. C. The features of the contestants were purely Indo-Aryan, with aquiline noses and dark eyes. Their colour was lighter than bronze, and their well-muscled chests, heavy shoulders, narrow waists, powerful hips and straight legs proclaimed them kings of the arena, centre of all attention. The like of these players could be found only in the best built races of the world.

The toss has already been decided. Ali and the butcher boy were to start as the "inner side." They are to run one by one and their opponents, the "outer side" are to try and catch them.

The size of the arena is about two hundred yards by two hundred yards. Its boundary is the hundred thousand strong crowd from all the neighbouring districts. Some are seated on the ground along the front lines ; others are bending on their knees, the vast majority standing. There are a few curses and compliments for each other's mothers and sisters exchanged whenever the crowd presses hard on those sitting in front. Those on horseback are safe from the jostle of the crowd. A good many sit on camels, two apiece sticking to the humps. There is a din that gives one an idea of what the tumult will be on the day of judgment.

Ali, in spite of his education and skill at modern European games loved the village sports which consisted mainly of Pirkaudi, long jumps, and weight lifting. His rustic self always came out whenever a game was on and he never felt it below his dignity to compete, in physical feats, with men of the lowest social rank. He was a local hero and that position he was not going to surrender even if it meant his discarding the European trousers for the Pirkaudi player's naked body.

"Ali is out" whispers a man, pressing his neighbour with his right hand. The word goes round. "Quiet, quiet," shout the headmen. The hundred thousand are instantly mute. Is it a spell or magic, or is it an advance dose of intoxication from the joy that is in store for them?

Ali is out. There he jumps from his lair. Is he a black buck, rustling out of his palace of bushes and grass, prancing on all fours, his beautiful large round eyes looking all round to watch for danger, and his muscles wrought up full pitch? Or is he a tiger slowly starting his first movement before he darts on his quarry, the bulging muscles of his forearms giving an idea of the power that lies behind those unmoving eyes, throwing out a determination to crush anything that falls in his way? Or is he a saint with his right arm lifted in the air, fist closed, only the forefinger lifted skywards, allegorical of the oneness of God and his communion with Him at the moment of his trial, signifying to the people that all power and glory is for Allah? With the left hand he touches the ground and with the forefinger he places the dust mark on his forehead, portraying his own humility like that of the dust, and a sign to the people that if he

wins it will be because God appreciated his humility and gave him his victory. 'He is a jealous God : all power is for him ; all else is weak.' There he stands facing the drum prancing on his feet like a racehorse and warming up for a combat with his opponents.

"Beat the drum hard, my friend; let the sound of your beats set fire to my vigour and my valour. Beat hard and quick and keep time with the beat of my heart and my feet. Beat hard."

There he walks to his favourite drummer. The beat of the drums is so loud that it seems to call upon its sister the thunder hidden beyond the skies to echo her challenge from the azure blue.

The Gujrat crowd are doing exactly similar things, appealing to the same God and expressing a like humility. No, God belongs to none. He belongs to all. He does not take sides in games or anything else. The best player will always win.

The drums are dead. You can hear a pin drop. Only the three voices of the contestants, throwing out challenges to each other, ring in the ear and rend the air. Ali is in the middle of the arena. He bends

forwards. His agility is like that of a panther. He stands still, dangles his arms in front of him. Now he rocks them from side to side. He wants to confound his adversaries as to the direction in which he is going to jump. They must not know which man he will hit first. The outer side is determined to hold its formation and keep together.

He is off. He has jumped to the right. He separates his adversaries. The man on his left is now five yards behind the leading man. Ali stretches their legs by making them run for about a hundred yards. He twists and turns like a hare chased by greyhounds, swerving now to the right, now to the left. He has manœuvred to create a wide gap between his two pursuers. Now is his time to strike. Look! He faces his opponents. He runs backwards. There is dead silence. Now is the critical moment. Ali must hit both his adversaries and escape. They are running like horses and the ground rings under their feet.

"Bravo, Ali, hit them hard, now is your time" shout half the audience.

There he runs backwards still, with both his arms fully stretched out, palms upwards, his forearms stiff as steel, as is also his proud neck. There he shouts :



"Come, you sons of proud mothers, join hands with me if you dare. Here I go in the open before the whole world, throwing out challenges. Join hands with me if you can."

"Wait, my boy," comes the reply.

"Wait till you taste the delight of the impact of my forearms, I will show you the joys of life. Wait."

"Catch him," shout the Gujrat crowd.

The two Khokars give one sprint and shoot like panthers. Ali withstands the blow. Hits his assailant on the chest.

"Come, taste my hand, come."

Now he suddenly turns on the second man.

"Scissors him," shout the Gujrat crowd.

The second Khokar gives one big jump and tries to clasp Ali's body with his legs closing like a pair of scissors as he comes down. Ali extricates himself. The crowd roars.

"Bravo, Ali. You are the semen of a brave man and fed on the milk of a grand woman."

Loud beat the Shahpur drums ; the people throw their turbans high in the air ; the Hamoka washerman, in his excitement, takes off his only silver ring and gives it to Ali, the village minstrel sings a couplet in his praise and then and there receives the very ring in reward ;

the Zailadar's son exchanges his turban with Ali signifying that henceforth they are brothers and that his support is assured in case Ali, like most other Pirkandi players, gives way to feminine charms and advances and elopes with someone else's wife. Ali is carried shoulder high.

The butcher boy also did well as the inner side. He escaped being caught every time he ran. When the game changed over and the Khokars became the inner side the crowd witnessed some fine runs. The Khokars were out to win the match even if they lost their lives in the bargain. They also escaped every time they ran. But during the last chase the butcher boy was out of breath or did not give as fast a sprint as the people expected. Some alleged he was not a sport, others said that his knee had been injured.

The game continued till sunset. Many were the matches hotly contested. Numerous players received scratches and, judging from the numbers carried home on the backs of friends, there were a good few knees dislocated. There was serious and long discussion over the final result of the chief match, but at long last the headmen declared the Khokars

successful. They had played a fine game. Gujrat District were declared victorious. The honours were even, as Shahpur had won on a previous occasion. The crowd could once more look forward to a hard contest next year at the same fair.

The crowd sang their way home, on empty stomachs but in jovial spirits. Clouds of dust from the feet of moving animals—trotting camels, galloping horses—horse-drawn vehicles, bullock carts, and pedestrians moving at a dog trot, covered the whole sky. Everybody's one aim was to get home as quickly as possible, mainly because they had no more money left in their pockets for their next meal. They spread into all directions. Some travelled by roads, and others, to avoid the dust, cut across fields.

Lincoln having distributed the prizes, two silk turbans, went back to his camp, but as he turned the corner he saw two rather familiar faces. One was Goswami, the Professor of Philosophy at the local College, and the other was a lecturer in Persian. They were both well known to be keen Pirkaudi fans. They had with them two young men, Ali, whom Mr. Lincoln knew of course, and his friend Buta. These boys had both spent a little time at the

Sargodha College at first and had later moved to a college at Lahore where earlier they had originally been together for six years. They were all riding in a two-wheel light cart drawn by a horse. The driver and one other passenger were on the front seat, and these four were sitting on burlap-covered straw cushions opposite each other on the two seats at the back. The pony's neck was hanging down, his head almost touching the ground. It was a country bred pony, fourteen hands high, and of a very light build. Its hip bones could be seen protruding prominently and its ribs counted from a few yards away. The driver was of an equally light build and looked just as starved. The little wretch of an animal found the weight in the *tum-tum*—as the cart was called—too much and whenever the wheels passed through a short sandy patch of the unmetalled road, it felt as if half a dozen hefty peasants had jumped on to the cart it was endeavouring to pull. The *tum-tum* creaked constantly and the passengers all held their breath to lighten the weight, imagining that this would also prevent the dry, worn-out harness from cracking. In the winter the driver occasionally fed the pony on raw flour and sugar mixed with

a little water, but latterly he had not had many customers, for the prices of agricultural products had gone down. Somewhere in the world people were growing too much cotton and too much wheat, and even though America and Argentina seemed a long way off, the Indian villagers, as well as the Indian pony, felt the effect of what was taking place in those two countries. The farmers could not afford to pay even fourpence for the ten-mile ride and preferred to walk. Nimar the driver could not afford to feed his pony properly. He himself looked lean not because he was starved but because he was built like that. He was at one time a Purbia grass cutter-cum-syce to the local Tehsildar, whose *tonga* he drove, but had been dismissed for continuously stealing the saddlery soap and the ponies' corn. Luckily for him, a fat woman belonging to his caste had married him. She had three growing up daughters, and her influence among a large section of the people they came in contact with, specially the farmers who came to see the Tehsildar or those whom Nimar met when the Tehsildar went out touring, encouraged her in the belief that they could easily make a comfortable living. Her husband could ply a bamboo cart for hire—

an art in which he was an expert, and she could open a tea stall for the *tonga* drivers, many of whom found it difficult to get wives and took refuge in her company. Her estimate of her own part of the business, being based on sound judgment and experience had proved entirely correct. Nimar did not like the Pathan *tonga* drivers sipping tea for long hours at his wife's stall, and being of a jealous nature his thin body became more emaciated than ever. To him well applied the Persian conundrum about jealousy :

“ I know of a bird which has neither feet nor wings ;

It lives neither in the skies nor under the earth,

It always eats the flesh of man.”

His wife's amorous talks with other men, though successful in collecting grist for the family mill, made Nimar a very short-tempered man, easily aroused to ire. Having not the courage nor the physique to quarrel with his wife, someone weaker than himself had to suffer the consequences of his feelings. How truly applied in his case the old saying, often used against boys who played the bully in school : “ Water flows only towards the lower ground.”

Nimar while thinking of what his wife would be doing at that time was wielding his stick on the pony. The leather thong had bit by bit broken away. When new it could reach the pony's neck. Later its end hit the pony's soft skin on the sides and near the girth. There and in between the hind legs it hurt most. It had become so short now, that the driver had resorted to hitting the poor animal with the stick. The pony had sore hip bones, and whenever Nimar hit these with his stick a blood stain remained on it to bear witness to the cruel procedure. Not having the power to pull the cart faster nor the freedom to escape, the pony could only bend beneath the falling blows. The *literati* at the back of the tum-tum were more interested in catching the train than in the prevention of the cruelty of which they were the indirect cause.

There was a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, but its local secretary was a kind-hearted old Hindu grain merchant, Bhola Shah, who had held this honorary post with conspicuous distinction for inactivity for over three years. The secretary of the society at Lahore often selected Hindus, for he had a feeling that a people who worshipped the cow

were bound to be kind to animals. Bhola Shah had during the first year of his office shown great determination to discharge his responsibilities with resolve and courage. The first case that came to his notice was that of a small donkey on which a certain village potter brought his grain for sale, grain which he had received from farmers for the pots he had supplied to them during the outgoing financial year. As his ill-luck would have it he brought the grain to Bhola Shah's shop, since he was known to be most straightforward in his dealings. Although like other grain dealers he quoted a price per maund of wheat with the usual deduction of customary charges amounting to four pounds of grain, *e.g.*, for a contribution for the local Hindu temple, cows' refuge home, possible dust and barley in the wheat, yet his price was usually a farthing or two per maund higher than the other grain dealers gave to the farmers.

As the potter unloaded the donkey the poor beast bent its back low. Bhola Shah immediately discovered that its back was sore. He arrested the potter's donkey and sent it to the local veterinary hospital. The potter was told that he would be charged the cost of upkeep before he could be allowed to take the



donkey away after it was cured, so he at once decided to squat at the door of Bhola Shah. Next day the potter's wife and three children joined him and they all started weeping and cursing. Mrs. Bhola Shah gave them food morning and evening to stop them heaping curses on the heads of her children, and Bhola Shah had eventually to pay the cost of the donkey's upkeep out of his own pocket. There and then he made up his mind that if the administration of the law for preventing cruelty to animals involved hardship or cruelty to human beings, he was going to take no steps to improve matters. That was the first and the last prosecution that took place at Bhalwal under this particularly benevolent piece of legislation. Nimar knew of this case, and thus he continued to beat his poor little pony unhindered. When he saw Mr. Lincoln he stopped beating the dear little thing, for he could not be sure whether the white man had not up his sleeve some more potent and effective law than the Act which Bhola Shah administered with such innate pacifism. But the moment Mr. Lincoln turned the corner, and while he was still considering in his heart how he would like—if he had the power to do so—to make the two

professors and the two young students pull the cart with the pony planted on the back seats, Nimar resumed his beating of the little creature.

Ali had intended to accompany his friend Buta to Bhalwal station and spend the night there with him, but finding the pony not up to the task imposed upon it, he jumped off the cart and promised to be at the Bhalwal station early in the morning. He could easily ride the eleven miles, and one of his father's horsemen servants could lead his pony back to Jamalpur.

Mr. Lincoln slept that night at Jamalpur, because the quickest way to reach Sargodha was to catch the early morning train from Bhalwal, a station only fifteen miles away from his camp. Consequently it was no use moving from there late in the evening.

As he entered the station gate the following morning he was horrified to see what appeared to be a dead body. As he looked more carefully, he noticed that the four men who carried the bed on which the body lay were dressed like the servants of a European officer. One of these he recognised immediately. He was Bucknall's orderly.

"Poor Bucky" he said to himself, "he was sleeping at the Bhalwal rest-house last night.

Probably he has been bitten by a snake or perhaps he fell off the roof of the house while he was drunk."

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he noticed that the bed on which the dead body was being carried was placed in front of the only first class compartment in the train, which was ready to move off. He was wondering whether to get into a second class compartment or ride the remaining nineteen miles to Sargodha, when to his pleasant surprise a man jumped off the bed. Having stretched himself and yawned, he quickly asked one of his carriers :

"Where are my polo sticks?"

"Ask your valet, Sir."

"You pig, you should know," and he gave him a blow in the face before entering his compartment. The servants ran away to a third class coach, and old Bucky had to come out and take up the bedding and spread it on his seat before Lincoln walked into the compartment. He had seen Lincoln from the top of the bed. He was awake all the time. He had instructed his servants not to wake him in the morning but to carry him to the station platform.

Bucky recollected the occasion when one evening he had continued to play the gramophone all night long and had prevented Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, who were his neighbours, from sleeping a wink. He did not want to face Lincoln, and had turned over towards the window before Lincoln walked in. Bucky pretended to sleep on till he knew that Lincoln had left the compartment and the station at Sargodha. He did not want to be seen by a European walking about a railway station in his pyjamas, but once Lincoln were gone he knew that in his striped pyjama suit he would be the best dressed man on the spot.

The two professors and Buta reached Bhalwal late in the evening. After eating a few cold *chaputis* (bread) and curry, they went to sleep on a bench on the platform, for there was no train to Sargodha till the next morning. Ali arrived early in the morning and went straight to the station. Both the boys were dressed in European clothes and wore European hats. Mr. Mufftee wore loose Persian trousers, a loose cloak and a henna-dyed beard. Goswami wore a loin cloth, a shirt and a cap, all made of hand-woven cotton cloth. Buta was fair of complexion and about five foot eight

in height. He was quite good at tennis and always stood first among a class of eighty students.

The train happened to be punctual, and when it drew into the station, Ali and his three friends entered an intermediate class compartment—not having money enough to go into the first or second class coaches nor being willing to sit on the hard wooden seats of the third class. Ali and Buta moved into one corner of the carriage far away from their older companions. As they were about to start a *tête-à-tête* conversation, they heard a quarrel outside their window. There were two men fighting with each other, one very dark and the other very fair. They both wore European clothes and had emerged from the adjoining intermediate compartment reserved for Europeans. One of them must have been a railway official, for a servant in the uniform of the North Western Railway, which was Government owned and conferred the status of Government service on all its employees, ran away towards the station-master's room to call him for assistance. There he reported very excitedly that a native was beating a Sahib. They all ran out together started belabouring the dark fellow. Although

the servant kept on shouting that it was the Sahib they were beating, the station staff in the excitement did not hear anything and gave the dark fellow a good thrashing before Ali stepped out and caught hold of the station master, whose glasses had by now fallen off and whose little green and red sticks were smashed. They were horrified to realise that the fair man was a Kashmir Brahmin and the dark fellow they had been thrashing was a Mr. Jones, who was a railway traffic inspector on his way from Lahore to take charge of his duties in the railway division next to Sargodha. Mr. Jones' father had been an engine driver on this line twenty years ago and it was his grandfather who had been converted to Christianity after the local missionary had promised to appoint him to the high office of sweeper of his household, which lucrative post was all that the poor half-caste could ever aspire to. But Jones quite honestly held the firm belief that his ancestor came from Wales, and it was only the lack of passage money which had continuously prevented them from going home and looking up his first cousins of the Jones family in the land which had bred so many famous wizards.

While the station master was still trying to adjust his tie before picking up his turban, it suddenly dawned upon him that he had just finished beating a Sahib. He was a little deaf and had not realised what the Sahib's servant had been shouting. His facial expression underwent a sudden change. His eyes bulged out with fright. He forgot all about the adjustment of his own clothes, and in a most apologetic manner started to wipe the dust off the clothes of Mr. Jones. The train guard, unaware of the great happenings, gave a whistle and the train moved off. The station master in a most amiable manner and with a broad smile—almost begging for forgiveness—put his hand on Mr. Jones's elbow and most carefully helped him to step towards his compartment. Mr. Jones was just able to jump into the moving train when, to his great horror, he saw the smiling face of the handsome Kashmiri, whose fair colour had been the cause of the great misfortune he had just suffered. He found his consolation in the most servile bow he received from the station master as the train crept away.

Buta pulled his head in from the window through which he had enjoyed the fun, and as

Ali and he sat on their seats and sighed " That's that," their eyes fell on their professors.

" Those two are the most priceless gems, Buta, aren't they ?"

" Don't I know what wisdom flowed out of their lips yesterday when we were riding in the *tum-tum*."

" The foulness of their talk still stinks in my ears."

The two professors had been saying nasty things about each other's religion and culture, and each had tried to excel the other—all by way of jokes, no doubt—in holding to ridicule things held dear by his adversary.

" Buta, do you notice the bulging pocket of Mr. Mufftee ? He offered me a share of that treasure."

" What has he got there ?"

" His old woman always stuffs him with almonds."

" Why ?"

" Because the local Hakeem (medico, practising the ancient Greek system of medicine) told her that almonds were very good for strengthening the brain, which those engaged in the teaching profession needed constantly to



replenish. He told me, when offering me some, that the teacher and the taught both needed to rebuild their brains, which were liable to wear out by constant study. To tell you the truth—" (and he said this in a whisper)—"the old boy only eats these because he thinks they will make him sexually strong. He has no children and his barren wife has shifted the blame on to him."

"Look at the old boy, Ali. He is at it again. He is munching more almonds."

"Do you know that he always gave me full marks for my Persian?"

"Why?"

"Because my father gave me two pigeons to give to Mr. Mufftee, who had asked for them. Being a good Mussulman he was not supposed to drink, but the medicine man told him that pigeon meat was most heating and would be equally efficacious. He has tried to secure a licence for a gun to shoot pigeons, but when he put in his application to the District Magistrate, Mrs. Mufftee's brother told the Magistrate confidentially that the old boy really wanted to shoot his wife, who was barren, and the shooting of birds was only a pretence."

"How can anyone say that she is barren?"

"The proof being that she has no children."

"That may be the old man's fault."

"Do you know, Buta, that down in Southern India where I went on a holiday trip with a group of other boys last summer vacation, their civil law allows only daughters to inherit the property. Men don't count at all. A woman has only to place the shoes of her husband outside the door of their house and this amounts to his divorce and he can never again enter the house."

"Why should women be the heads of their families and own all the property?"

"Because one is always sure who one's mother is."

Ali and Buta both felt that it was time they diverted their attention to Professor Goswami. He was a man of about sixty. His people originally belonged to Cawnpore. He had been educated at Oxford with the money his father had embezzled from his employer at Delhi during the great Mutiny of 1857. When all was quiet he settled in the Punjab. He had come down in the Indian Civil Service examination. Having failed to eat the requisite number of dinners at Lincoln's Inn, he could not be called to the

Bar. He was obliged to seek employment in educational spheres, where he felt that he would have full scope to spread sedition against the white man, who he thought was really the cause of his not securing a lucrative appointment. He had never married, not only because he had learnt in Europe that children reduced one's standard of living, but also because he had taken a vow while still young that he would not marry till he had succeeded in making India free. He had an unshakable fear that should the thought that India was not free creep into his mind at a critical moment, the sadness of it was sure to inhibit him in the discharge of his nuptial responsibilities. He looked pale and haggard. He was peevish in character. In spite of his unrelenting struggle over thirty years, India was not yet free. He wore a look of despair. He never smiled. His clothes were made of Indian hand made cloth. Having come to the conclusion that it was not possible for an unarmed people to shake off a foreign Government—behind which stood large armies—with the bombs and pistols of a few terrorists and revolutionaries, he was inclined to the view that if he could only rear a young generation of healthy and strong Indians and

educate them on the right lines, he could perhaps make his country free. With this object in view he undertook a crusade against vegetarianism, and lost no opportunity of preaching to such of his countrymen who did not do so, to eat meat.

On the occasion of the country fair, he had made up his mind to invite Buta to his house at Sargodha and to show him some of his manuscripts which contained the fruits of his investigations on the problems of meat-eating. Although he was aware that Buta ate meat, yet he knew that Buta's mother and some other relations were vegetarians. Everything conveyed to Buta was bound to trickle to his relations. Ali had also been invited by the professor to join them in a pot of tea at his bachelor-apartments at the termination of their twenty-mile train journey to Sargodha.

The Tehsildar and his Assistant being away at Jamalpur, their wives saw each other regularly every morning. At about the time when this train was approaching Sargodha Gulshan Ara had called to see her friend and neighbour Chandravati. After exchanging the customary salutations, Chandra invited her friend to take a seat.

She started the conversation.

"Yesterday morning I was sitting in my boudoir on the ground floor abutting on the street. I was inside the *chick* which is supposed to keep out the flies but never does, because a score or two always come riding in on you as you pop in and out of the rooms during the course of the day. I was winding wool for a pullover which I wanted to knit for my eldest son. What do you think happened?"

"I haven't the ghost of an idea."

"Well, my dear, when I tell you your hair will stand on end. Pieces of the sky will fall off at the shock of a mere mention of the strange occurrence. I could not believe my ears when I heard what I heard."

"What was it, sister?"

"I heard two men talking to each other just outside my door. I peeped through the *chick* and discovered that they were both friends of my husband. One of them was a lawyer, a Muslim, and the other a Hindu merchant. These men have often played tennis together with my husband at the club, and the three are all well known in the whole of the civil station as chums. Both these men are married."

"Yes, go on."

" Well, they are both swine. The Hindu said to the Muslim : ' Abdul, can you find me a Muslim woman ? ' Abdul answered : ' Yes, of course, old boy, but why a Muslim girl ? ' ' Because they are healthy and strong and their bodies are muscular.' "

Gulshan giggled.

" ' Oh, I know a girl who will suit you to the ground,' said Abdul, ' but tell me, Pritam, if my sister-in-law, I mean your wife, is likely to want a Muslim young man, then the husband of this girl I have mentioned to you would do the job.' ' You are the very devil, Abdul. You are one up on me. By bye.' Thus they separated. Our men-folk are fiends, and that mainly because their wives are in purdah and there is no check on them. If their wives, sisters, and mothers went about with them, their language and conversation would become more refined and chaste than is the case at present.

" You and I are each other's bosom friends, since we have known each other for nearly six months, that is ever since you came here. My kidneys and heart become cool and refreshed when I see you. In colder climates no doubt people like to feel that their hearts are warmed

by love and affection, but of course we, belonging to a hot country, like this expression better. On, I wish everyone in India could be friends as we are !”

“ It is all a got-up snow,” interjected Gulshan. “ This Hindu-Muslim discord only exists because it pays our men-folk to keep it going. Hindu retailers tell the Hindu wholesalers not to sell anything on credit to Muslim retailers, for the latter would compete with their Hindu brethren, in the Muslim villages. These shopkeepers, always preach unity amongst Hindus and urge the sacrifices for the sake of the Hindu religion and the Hindu community. On the other hand, when a Muslim gets into a high office, the other Muslims rush up to him in hundreds and point out that his only chance in life to do some service to his community has arrived and special efforts on his part are needed to make up for the march which the Hindus have already stolen upon Muslims in Government service, and their one request always is that, so far as it is humanly possible, he should give all the jobs to the Muslims and none to the Hindus. You see, my dear, a man will use any old argument to achieve his object in all walks of life, and this communal discord

is a very useful and good stick with which our men-folk can beat the old Indian goat—her political progress.

“You can see for yourself what good and sincere friends you and I are. I suppose the men fight because their pockets are concerned ; it is all a question of the wretched belly. Men started quarrelling when Abel and Cain were brothers, and I am sure they will continue to do so till end of the world. But I do wish they could give the women-folk a chance to come out and take their share in the great task that lies before us, of diminishing human suffering and improving and adding to the happiness of mankind. We have no share in our national affairs, and I am certain that we have a great deal to contribute towards our national progress, as the women of other countries have done in their own homelands.”

“ Do you know what I should like to do ? ”

“ No,” said Gulshan.

“ I should make it compulsory for every graduate in our country to learn a little about Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. There should be courses in comparative theology prescribed at all our educational institutions, whether for men or women. I am sure you know



nothing about the Hindu religion, and that you have all sorts of weird ideas about us and our philosophy. Now tell me, Gulshan, what do you think of us ?”

“ You won’t mind ? ”

“ No. ”

“ Tell me one thing. Why do you believe in the transmigration of souls ? How can the soul of a human being go into a cow or into a rat ? Shall I tell you what I heard two of my neighbours say about the Hindus ? ”

“ Yes, go on, Gulshan. Full speed ahead. ”

“ You won’t mind if I repeat what I heard ? Repetition of a blasphemous remark is not blasphemy. ”

“ Go on, Gulshan. I would like to hear what you have to say. May be there is some truth in what you have heard ; perhaps I have an explanation for what seems strange to you at the moment. ”

“ Both these women were Muslims and there was no Hindu lady present. If there had been one I am certain that this talk would not have taken place. It is because we do not mix enough with each other, it is because we can be spotted from our costumes whether we are Hindus or Muslims, that people can take

liberties against each other in each other's absence."

"Go on, Gulshan. Say what you were going to say. I won't think ill of you."

"Well, you see, one woman was saying to the other that in her village the *bania* kept a fat goat. He always said that his mother's spirit had gone into the animal. He fed it on milk and bread and butter and honey, and kept it clean and always close to himself. He said that he noticed a motherly affection in the eyes of this goat, which looked like those of his mother. But one day the goat broke loose, strayed away right outside the town, and was seen eating a doubtful thing. A man who knew the *bania* and saw this scene went running to his shop and told him what the goat was up to. The *bania* ran to the spot, and when he saw what it was doing he hit the goat with a stone and never allowed it to come back to his house."

As Gulshan said this a redness of shame suffused her cheeks, and Chandra could read an unuttered apology in the face of her friend. Realising that Gulshan was feeling thoroughly ashamed of herself, Chandra tried to put her at her ease by talking in a manner which gave

Gulshan the impression that Chandra was not hurt at all, but that she treated the whole talk as a good joke.

Chandra smiled, and in her disarming manner gave Gulshan a push on the shoulder with her right hand which nearly toppled her off the low stool on which she was sitting. She said :

“ You are an unmitigated ignoramus, Gulshan. You goose, why should you think that I should feel hurt at what you were going to say? Why should I have any qualms or feelings about what my friends say or do ? The feelings if any, should really arise in the minds of those who perform the act. They are the people who should feel ashamed or happy. No doubt the listeners cannot remain unaffected, but the blame or credit for what is done must be left to the doer. There is great ignorance in our country about things which are dear to us all and which mean so much to the country. Hard words never lead people far. You are just one of those whose mind is absolutely blank so far as Hindu philosophy is concerned. Every Indian should be proud of this philosophy, which has been unrivalled in the world. Our Brahmins have for generations past devoted

their whole time to the unravelling of the secrets of creation, life and eternity. These Brahmins are hereditary specialists, as you might call them. You may accuse them of having divorced theory from practice, but you can never blame them for not carrying out sufficient investigation into these problems of spirit and matter.

“If you go to Europe you will find that some of their greatest men have devoted all their lives to learning our languages and literature and translating into their own languages our most valuable books, containing treasures of thought of immeasurable value. In India we have reached such mental bankruptcy that if we want to know something about our own literature we have to go to the West to study it properly and to learn it from western people who have acquired the art which should have been ours. In you we have one who is our kith and kin, and all that you know about us is what you have exhibited in the flowery language which has just fallen from your lips. Gulshan, please do not feel crushed. We are friends and we love each other like sisters, and we should talk freely. I do not want to hurt your feelings, as I know you did not want to hurt mine. You

must be wondering whether I have anything real to contribute towards the dissipation of your unbelief in the greatness of our religious theories. I have rambled a great deal, but I must come to the point and tell you that I have lots to say. As a matter of fact, you could start reading our literatures on this one subject alone and you would need a whole lifetime to fathom what there is to be learned. It is not easy for me to explain this intricate doctrine of transmigration of souls, particularly to a person like you who has not only no background of Hindu religious education, but who is void of all education. But I shall try and put it to you as simply as possible, and I shall start with a question. Tell me, why are some people born more lucky than others ?”

“ I cannot say,” replied Gulshan.

“ Well, my dear, after thousands of years of investigation our philosophers have come to the conclusion that the only way of unravelling this knot is to believe in the transmigration of souls. This theory alone can explain the vagaries of fortune of men and women who are born in different circumstances some with silver spoons in their mouths and others to face

poverty. I know it is not easy for you to follow this."

"Please, Chandra, tell me a little more about it."

"Well, my baby, in order to be able to grasp the subject-matter a little you must know the Hindu theory of creation. According to us, the spirit or god who creates is called Brahma and the god who preserves the created things is called Vishnu and the god who destroys is called Shiva. Whether these are three aspects of the same unseen power, which you may call one God, or whether they are separate entities unconnected with each other, I won't discuss at the moment nor bother your little head about. Just now I think it will be sufficient for me to say a little about Brahma.

"This is the spirit that creates. A portion of this spirit, or god as you like to call it, enters into each human body at birth. Whatever that human being or that body does during its earthly life, is written on this spirit or soul. Your deeds, good as well as bad, are imprinted on it, and when a person dies this spirit leaves the earthly body and hovers about in the world with all actions of the defunct human body written on it. I might describe this

spirit as a slate on which the deeds and misdeeds of human beings are written. The soul can enter another human body at its birth only in accordance with its own merits. If it belonged to a man who had performed good deeds in the world, then this soul would be entitled to enter a body that was likely to lead a good and comfortable life. And thus, if the second human body behaves itself and its good deeds accumulate on the surface of the soul, then when that body disintegrates the soul will be ready to enter another body which is likely to lead a still better life. So the process of improvement can continue until the soul has become so pure as to be able to merge with the spirit of Brahma, the Creator, the spirit from which it emanated and to which it originally belonged. You Moslems, whenever you hear of a person having died, say : 'Inna lilla hi wa inna ilaihi rajioon,' which means : 'We came from Allah and to him we return.' The same principle underlies all religions, Gulshan. There are bound to be a few superficial variations, but the essence is all the same.

“But if the actions of a human being are bad, the soul when it leaves the body is not entitled to enter another good human receptacle.

As a punishment for the misdeeds in its previous incarnation, the soul will have to enter a body whose life is not likely to be quite so good and comfortable as the former one, and if this second body does not behave itself and accumulates evil instead of virtue, then at the next creation the soul enters a worse body than before. Thus the downward trend and degeneration continues until the soul is no longer fit to remain in a human body and enters the animal world. Islam also contemplates a heaven in which, besides human beings, there will also be animals.

“Gulshan, the spirit of sacrifice is so noble and so great that it elevates the human beings who practise it. This spirit of sacrifice alone helps you to differentiate between the brute and the godly in man. The sacrifice of the comforts of life made by a human being brings him reward, but when he is reborn he does not know who he was in his previous life. Consequently, when a man makes sacrifices in this world he is doing so in full realisation of the fact that at his regeneration he will not know that he will be benefiting by his virtues in a previous life. The sacrifices made are therefore of an unselfish nature and consequently sublime. I already notice in your face a



desire to say : ' What is the use of making all these sacrifices when you are not likely to know that you will be reaping the fruits of your own efforts ? ' Well, that is a very mundane way of looking at things, but if I were to explain this also to you it would take a long time. It is not possible for me to impart to you with all the goodwill in the world, the education which you should have acquired over a period of fifteen years if your father had had the wisdom to send you to school and college. But you must realise that it is never too late to mend, and you can start even now. Do not carry away the idea that I think ill of you for your ignorance, because there are thousands of us Hindus, men and women, who are as ignorant of the great Muslim religion and its philosophy as you are of ours. You will meet millions amongst us, who know no more about Islam than that it introduced into India loose trousers and a spouted pot for ablutions. There are also millions amongst us who know no more about Hindu culture than what is represented by *Langoti* (Jockeystrap dress) and Dal Roti (lentil and bread vegetarian diet). It is only the irascible, fiery, and short-tempered who speak evil of other people's religions."

## CHAPTER V

The train arrived at Sargodha punctually. It was Monday but a public holiday, for it was the birthday of Guru Nanak, the first Guru and founder of the great Sikh religion. Ali and Buta had gladly accepted the professor's invitation to tea. Out of the three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, a hundred and thirty-four were public holidays in India, including fifty-two Sundays. Followers of every religion had to have a certain number of holidays, and when a few Muslim, Hindu or Sikh clerks were absent it was no use the others doing any work, for one missing link in the chain along which travelled the official files made work impossible. At the Sargodha station as the train arrived these three parted company with Mr. Mufftee, who hurried home in a *tum-tum*. The professor and his two young guests walked on foot, as the professor's house was close by.

The main object of Goswami in inviting the two young men was not that he needed their

company, but because he wished to convert these two to his way of thinking in matters connected with religious beliefs and politics, including the problem of a common type of dress for all Indians. It had become his one aim in life now to capture the imagination of the youth, for he had by experience and failure realised the wisdom of the saying that old parrots never learn.

Having given some tea and sweets to the two young students and shown them his secret library at the back of his living room, he brought them into the verandah and all three planted themselves comfortably in high-backed stools made out of skinned reeds and bound together with string.

"Boys, how can we make our motherland free?"

"We have not the ghost of an idea," replied Buta.

"You show us the way, Sir, and all the youth of this Province will be with you," interjected Ali.

"First of all, my friends, we must have healthy bodies. Unless we are a well-built race we can never command respect."

"What about the yellow races, Sir?"

“Size does not matter. It is muscle and stamina. If only our people could eat anything and everything like them we could be a very strong people.”

“But we are a very healthy and strong race of people already.”

“Not all of us. If we could but persuade everyone to eat meat we should become a uniformly healthy race. Although the Moslems, the Sikhs and Hindu Rajputs and Jats eat meat, yet there are a very large number of us who are vegetarians by faith and refuse to eat meat.”

“India has a very varied climate. The southern parts of India are so hot that a meat diet is probably not good for the people,” said Ali. “I went to Madras last year on a trip, and we went to an Indian State where we were told that in days gone by one of the rulers had invited the Viceroy to lunch. The Maharaja had never seen meat at his dinner table. The smell of the very first meat course made him so ill that he was sick at the table, and ever since no Maharaja arrives at the table till the guests have finished the meat stage of the banquet. One man’s food is another man’s poison. Why should you think that all human

beings all over the world should eat similar food? If the French eat frogs, the British eels and the Chinese dogs, is there any reason why we should eat these too?"

Buta was meanwhile turning things over in his mind and trying to imagine what sort of things the professor must have eaten in England. He felt that he had probably eaten everything that came in his way in the hope that such a course would make his country free, forgetting all the time that a man is respected most in foreign countries when he respects his own principles, especially such as are good.

"It may be true of Madras, what you say, Ali, but in northern India not a single man should remain without a meat diet, for the climate is very cold."

"But we can live a most healthy life on wholenmeal wheaten bread and milk and milk produce. Look at our Aryan ancestors, what a healthy race of people they were and yet they lived on milk and wheat. They were a pastoral people and possessed a wonderful physique."

"That is exactly what I wanted to tell you boys. The Indo-Aryans were meat-eaters. I have made a special study of this period of our history, for I take great pride in the fact that we are descended from that grand stock of men."

“Do tell us something, Sir, for our knowledge is very shallow and limited. We have read a little but not much. When we were at our Christian school we tried to read everything we could get hold of concerning our own religion, for we were afraid of turning Christian. There was practically no favourable literature in the language we know best—English. But we managed to jog along gathering bits of knowledge here and there even from what seemed to be an adverse commentary. We just believe to be true the reverse of what was written by the Christian missionaries.”

“The Indo-Aryans belonged to the same stock as the Indo-Iranians,” said the professor “and they both shared the veneration of the cow. The Egyptians also held the cow in great veneration. There were seven agricultural districts in that country in her ancient days, and each district had a sacred cow, called the Cow of Hathar. It is natural that a pastoral civilisation all over the world extending from Egypt to India should hold in great esteem an animal that was the chief source of its wealth. It consisted mainly of cows, oxen and horses, and the Aryans ate the meat. You both probably remember Pharaoh’s dream about the seven fat

kine and seven lean kine, and how this dream was interpreted by Joseph to foretell the coming of seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Cattle dominated the thoughts of all men, even the kings."

"But you stagger me, Sir, when you say that our ancestors the Aryans ate meat; is it really true?"

"Yes, it is, Buta."

At this moment the local Brahmin priest, who was a personal friend of the professor and often walked into his house unceremoniously, uninvited and unannounced, happened to pass by the road that ran along the terrace at one end of the verandah of the house. He was in the habit of having long and learned discourses with the professor on matters pertaining to ancient history and literature. The professor enjoyed seeing him and always welcomed his arrival. On this particular occasion the Brahmin carried one or two books under his arm. He wore a saffron loin cloth and a sheet of similar colour over his shoulder. His head and his face were closely shaven. As he noticed two other men talking to the professor, his face beamed with joy and his white teeth shone with glee at the thought that

an interesting discussion must be going on. He immediately stepped in, eager for the fray, excited not less than an all-in wrestler when he jumps into the arena to measure his wit and muscle against his adversary. He quickly walked into the verandah, and after having shaken his right hand below the wrist half a dozen times in quick succession by way of presenting his salutations, he suddenly planted himself in one of the chairs. Lifting it with both hands, he pressed it hard on the ground so as to fix it firmly enough to bear his weighty personality without any chance of a breakdown.

“What did you say was true, professor?” enquired the priest.

“That our ancestors the Aryans ate Gosht (meat).”

This was enough to make the priest fly into a rage. He misunderstood the professor in the heat of the moment and thought that the professor had said ‘Baragosht’ (beef). First of all, he spat on the ground as is customary amongst all orthodox people. This was a habit common both to Hindus and to Muslims, particularly in the villages. Whenever the word ‘pig’ was mentioned every faithful Muslim spat as religiously



and as quickly as did the Hindus if the word 'beef' were mentioned. The idea was that the mere mention of the words 'pork' and 'beef' created such a mental abhorrence that human beings spat out as they always did on smelling something really bad. The mouth was to be cleansed immediately by removing the saliva, which if swallowed might have meant eating a thing which had become polluted by the thought of forbidden meat. Often it had been noticed that when Muslims, sitting out in a circle in an open space in the village, talked of a boar hunt they one and all spat on the ground when the word 'boar' was mentioned.

The people had devised one way of getting out of this difficulty. They avoided the mention of these words in their conversation. When the Muslims wished to refer to the boar they called him the 'Ugly Face,' and whenever the Hindus wished to refer to beef they called *baragosht*, 'the great meat.'

Having spat on the ground the priest rose from his chair, started raining at the professor and showered upon him a ceaseless volley of abuse for insulting his religion. "How dare you insult my religion," shouted the priest and then took hold of him by the shirt near his chest

with his left hand, and, taking his cloth slipper off with the right, wanted to beat the professor's head with it. The priest's face was pale with anger. He was biting his lower lip and was too angry to be able to say anything. His religion had been insulted, and, were he to suffer injury at the hands of the professor, he could go round the town displaying it in proof of his being a true martyr in the cause of his faith and worthy of adoration and liberal donations. The professor sat there unmoved, for it was a sacrilege to raise one's hand against a priest. When the priest—now livid with rage—was about to strike—Ali who so far had waited in order to keep out of a religious controversy, rose from his seat and caught hold of the priest and said :

“What are you excited about?”

“He has insulted my religion.”

“How?”

“By insinuating that our ancestors, the Indo-Aryans, ate beef?”

“But I did not mention the word beef,” interjected the professor, “I only said meat nor did I say that the Indo-Aryans were Hindus. They were not Hindus. You did not give me the chance to complete my sentence. Hinduism is of later growth. It is a religion which has

scope as much for the man who lives in the jungle and worships trees and stones as for the most learned philosopher of the world. It is a ladder upon which man climbs as he progresses spiritually. It is a religion which has grown out of the experience of centuries, through ceaseless philosophical researches of our great thinkers, particularly the Brahmins."

"I am so sorry I did not understand you. I felt so upset on hearing the word meat, by which I thought you meant beef, that I lost my balance of mind. I was shocked at the suggestion that our ancestors behaved like that."

"Why should we be shocked at what our ancestors did?" remarked Ali. "If some one were to say to the modern Arabs that their ancestors ate pig in Arabia, do you think they would feel insulted? The ancient Arabs did eat pig. But they were not Muslims. The Prophet of Islam did not convey to them the commandment against eating pig till the seventh century A.D., until when all Arabs except Jews ate this animal."

"Why didn't the professor mention this? If he had made a similar remark about Muslims than I would have had no cause for grievance. But I am sorry; perhaps I was a little hasty.

Now I realise that you were talking about Aryans and not Hindus and that you said meat and not beef. Proceed."

"Gentlemen, you must understand that our talk is now confined only to meat-eating, with no reference to anything else."

"How did some of us go off meat-eating, professor?" enquired Buta. "So long as you refer only to the Indo-Aryans no bad blood should be created, and I am sure the Brahmin would not resent the shedding of the light of knowledge on an academic discussion, and our talk is but academic, for we all realise that it is no use trying to change the ideas of a people, ideas and sentiments which they hold so dear and which mean so much to them. If the whole world thought alike and acted alike it would be a dull place. There is no doubt that, considering the pace at which things are moving in the world, our progress in modernity is slow, but that is no reason why we should discard all those traits of our character which in our estimation represent what is so beautiful and divine. Let us proceed with the meat-eating discussion."

"Subject to what the priest Sahib has to say, my own humble opinion is that some of

us went off meat-eating with the introduction of the theory of Ahimsa."

"What is that?" enquired Ali.

"The two religious reformers, Gautama Buddha, founder of Buddhism, who died about 543 B. C., and Mahavira, founder of Jainism, who died about 527 B. C., rebelled against the hold of Brahminism on the people."

As he said this he looked furtively across towards the priest to see if a further assault were brewing, and as an insurance against all possible risks tendered the remark :

"With due deference to present company, if the Brahmins of those days had been as broadminded as our friend present with us, there would have been no room for those reformers."

The priest gave a smile of approbation.

"These two reformers felt," proceeded the professor, "that their people had strayed from the strict path of rectitude laid down for them by the Vedas and had taken to animal sacrifices, which to their two great minds were not only revolting but quite unnecessary. They did not approve of the doctrine of animal sacrifices, which were supposed to expiate human crimes and were meant as the price at which peace

with the Almighty could be purchased. These two great men for the first time in the progress of our religious thought introduced the theory of Ahimsa—non-injury to living creatures. Consequently when the epics of Mahabharata were composed about A. D. 200 the doctrine of Ahimsa had gained the upper hand.

“Asoka, the most powerful monarch India has ever known whose dominion extended from Mysore to the northernmost corner of Afghanistan, accepted Buddhism, and with him went the vast majority of the Indian people. Ahimsa was an accepted doctrine throughout his kingdom. Asoka erected a rock edict about 256 B. C. which among other things laid down that not more than three animals per day were to be killed in his kitchen where thousands were killed before. Two peacocks and one antelope were all that he now permitted himself and all others who were fed from his kitchen.”

“What language or script is this edict written in?” enquired Ali.

“It is written in the Brahma script, which is the mother of Nagri and all other scripts, but is different from Sanskrit. It was probably introduced by Phoenician traders, for it is very much like the Semitic script. Brahma is

supposed to have been invented by the God Brahma, the Creator. It had twenty-two Semitic characters, which were later increased to forty-four to suit our Indian phonetics."

"Let us get on with the meat-eating problem and see how on this question depends our freedom," remarked Ali.

"This Ahimsa theory has left its mark on the national character of those of us who do not eat meat. Even though there are very few Jains left in India, yet the influence of Ahimsa continues to exist and deprive some of us of a nourishing meat diet. In some towns, more particularly of Marwar and Rajputana, you will see for yourself the effect of a vegetarian diet on human bodies. There you will find stray persons walking about with pieces of cloth held up against their nostrils to prevent them from swallowing or breathing in small unseen insects. You must have known several cases where, at the outbreak of plague in a town, some people in accordance with the advice of the health authorities trapped the plague-infested rats with the traps provided free of cost by the Health Department, but instead of destroying them let these dangerous plague-carriers loose in the quarters of their neighbours in other parts of the

town. You must also have heard of cases where ownerless dogs and monkeys, that do harm to fruit trees have been caught, and instead of being destroyed have been conveyed by carts to distant places and let loose. The result always is that these animals find their way home again. The Muslims are particularly guilty in not destroying stray dogs, and this is surprising when it is said that once ownerless and harmful dogs were destroyed in Mecca with the permission of the Holy Prophet.

The Jain religion in its long fight with Buddhism was eventually overpowered, and numerically it is no longer one of the great religions of India. But I cannot understand why some of us do not eat meat as much as the Muslims and the Christians do. The vegetarian diet is likely to give people an inferiority complex and others assume airs of superiority when talking to them. You see, my boy, the Hindu Rajputs are the bravest soldiers in India. They are as brave as lions, and they all eat meat. No doubt they do not touch beef, but there are plenty of other good meats in India besides beef, and we should not deprive ourselves of this nourishing food on account of our idiosyncrasies. It is our foremost duty to enable our children,



both boys and girls, to build up healthy bodies. We must not waste food that is nourishing. Our system needs a certain number of calories per day. If you eat meat, you put a small quantity of food into your stomach and your body receives the requisite amount of energy. On the other hand, if you eat cabbages, cauliflower, potatoes and rice, you have to consume such large quantities in order to get the same amount of energy that your stomach becomes distended. Consequently persons, particularly those who lead sedentary lives, become corpulent. We shall never have good figures unless we eat meat. I wish this prejudice against meat-eating could die. We have been under foreign domination ever since the Muslims invaded our motherland in the year 712, when Sind was conquered by the Arab—Mohamed Bin Qasim, and, as bad luck would have it, when the Moghul Emperors became weak and their rule was about to expire, the European Christians stepped in. I have a feeling, Buta, you will probably call it an obsession, but I sincerely feel that we Indians will never rule ourselves so long as all of us do not eat meat. You can say what you like about peace and love and peaceful methods of achieving our objects in

this world, but the truth is that in the long run it is brute force which tells. On this planet of ours, it is the man or the nation with the strongest army that will rule and not the saints. Let the saints sacrifice everything in this world in the hope of reaping a reward in the next, but I am an ordinary human being and I prefer to enjoy the one bird in hand rather than the two in the bush. This world was created for me and you—ordinary human beings— and not for saints. There will always be more ordinary men than saints, and amongst the former those who are more expert in the use of force will always have the upper hand. Argue in any way you like, you will never convince me that an ordinary human being in spite of being the top dog would prefer to be the under dog, no matter what the theoretical advantages in favour of the latter condition. I want India to be strong and free, and this she will never be so long as we as a race do not eat meat. We must remove all prejudices against eating meat. I have no hesitation in taking you into my confidence and making the confession that I do eat meat myself, even though I have to do it secretly. I know a butcher in the bazaar and I have an understanding with him that when

I pass by his shop I throw a handkerchief quickly over the counter in front, and on the journey back a little later I find a small parcel of meat waiting for me. I snatch it up without reducing my pace and come home. At the end of the month he sends me the bill and I pay. I have some meat cooked this morning if you would care to stay on and have your morning meal with me ; but if you are getting bored with this conversation I must change the topic."

"No Sir, go on. It is most interesting. We are young and full of hope and enthusiasm. We want India to be free, even if it be at the cost of giving up our old habits and religious tenets. I would do anything to achieve our freedom. We must use every weapon that comes to hand to defeat the enemy, even if it be our falling down from our high ethics, down to the level of the beast and eating meat. A drowning man should try to take what support he can even from a straw. '*Mardi ke na kardi.*' 'A woman threatened with death, what will she not do?' We in India are threatened with a political death, and we should have no scruples about doing everything which helps us to achieve our object." "I would even go to the extent of saying that we should

drink alcohol if that is likely to make us courageous and brave" said the professor. "Although Manu says that any Brahmin who drinks spirits must be made to commit suicide by drinking molten metal, yet alcohol is not forbidden to the general body of Hindus as it is to the Muslims. As a matter of fact, in the Vedas, Hindus are enjoined to drink alcohol, particularly soma, in certain rituals."

"Now, Sir, for God's sake don't preach the taking of alcohol," remarked Buta. "It would be the ruination of us Hindus. It would not only burn our insides in this hot country, but would ruin us financially. We are a poor people and cannot afford to indulge in expensive drinks. Every penny is needed to feed and clothe our women and children, and, as you know, we have nothing to spare. You must not forget the political aspect of drink. All the excise revenue in our Province comes out of Hindu pockets, and the Muslim, who are forbidden strong drink by the Qoran, do not contribute a penny. Do you realise that the Muslims benefit from the hospitals, schools and health services, which are financed by these revenues, as much as we Hindus do? I do not believe that drinking has anything to do with the

bravery of human beings. Just see the example of the Muslims. They do not drink alcohol at all and yet look at the Pathans of the North-west Frontier Province, how strong and bold they are. Death has no fear for them and they have not the slightest hesitation in taking human life when their honour is involved. I will tell you what happened to a vegetarian friend of mine the other day. You will laugh. This fellow, who came from the heart of Lahore City, went to the District Magistrate and took out a licence for a twelve-bore gun, for he wanted to shoot dacoits. He had never handled a gun before, and when he brought it home he thought he had better practise shooting. He tied the gun to the side of his bed, loaded it, tied a piece of string to the trigger, went back five yards, and pulled it. The gun went off, but my friend fell down unconscious with the shock of it."

"It is funny, but not true," said Buta. I have a better opinion of vegetarians than you have."

"Say what you like about meat-eating, but I do not think an educated man like you should set a bad example by trying to justify strong drink, even though it be for the

laudable object of making us brave and fit to be free."

"All right, we will give up this digression and revert to the main object of our conversation."

"Go on, professor," remarked Buta. "We are grown up enough to stand a discussion. If we can live through Hindu-Muslim riots on account of beef-eating, we shall survive your conversation."

The priest had already spat twice on the floor, but had now become so inured to the shock that he did not speak.

"My main object", said the professor, "in making a study of this problem has been to devise ways and means of resolving our differences with our Muslim countrymen, and if we can find ways of eliminating the causes which create our difficulties we shall be on the road to that unity which is so essential if we are to be free. You know as well as I do what large numbers of our people are killed over religious differences connected with cow slaughter. We consider the cow sacred and the Muslims take it as their sacred duty to sacrifice animals once a year. Five poor people can club together to sacrifice one bull or cow, whereas the richer

people can afford to sacrifice a goat or sheep for each member of the family. The Hindus of Bengal sacrifice black buffaloes and give the meat to the poor depressed classes."

"But it is always a bull buffalo," said the Priest.

"True. But when poor Muslims wish to kill bulls and eat beef—since it is cheap—we object to beef being conveyed through the streets of our towns and this causes many riots. Of course I realise that there is a difference between a bull buffalo and an ordinary bull. According to Hindu mythology the Goddess Durga is supposed to have destroyed evil personified in the buffalo demon called Mahish. This is mentioned in the Durga Purana, therefore the sacrifice of bull buffalo is permitted. If we Hindus only objected to cow sacrifice and allowed Moslems to eat the meat of the bull at least half the trouble over beef eating would be eliminated.

From lack of education and consequential stupidity we have become divorced from our ancient literature, which is often wrapped in a language which is not only unknown to us but is also different from Sanskrit, the basic language of all Indian dialects. This ignorance

of ours is the cause of a great deal of our modern troubles. We have ceased to advance with the times and to assimilate what we find good in others. The synthesis of growing Indian cultures, civilisations and religious thought has been our strongest point. No religion was ever able to make headway against Hinduism. Both Buddhism and Jainism were eventually absorbed into Hinduism. Why? Because we did not object to changes. The moment our religious beliefs and thoughts became static we began to stagnate. We have failed consequently to make headway against Islam and Christianity, both of which are now claiming more and more adherents as years go by. The Muslims in this Province of the Punjab have increased from 52 per cent. of the population to 57½ per cent. in ten years, and we have gone down during the course of these years. Our contact with each new religion has left its mark on our theories and practices, but we have been all the richer for it. Our impact with Christianity and Islam is having its effect but very slowly. Orthodoxy in our religion—as in fact in all religions—is a great stumbling block in the way of our progress. We do not allow widow re-marriage, and look what the result is!



All our widows, and mostly young ones, some of them having never seen their husbands, for their marriages were never consummated, become Muslims and marry Muslims, particularly in eastern Bengal and Assam. Look at the Muslim law of property. Each daughter receives half the share of every brother and the wife receives one-eighth, as also the mother and the father, and a man cannot leave more than one-third of his property by will to anyone but a charity. No heirs can get more than is due to them. Look at their law of divorce. We allow no divorce at all, in no circumstances whatsoever. If our religion loses its great advantage of being a progressive religion, we shall go under."

"Buta," continued the professor, "numbers are everything in the world. It is the heads that count and not the brains. Those who have more votes win the elections and rule the country. We must do everything in our power to preserve our numerical superiority in India, else we are doomed to perpetual subjugation. Attempts have been made in recent years to modify our law on widow re-marriage, prevention of child marriages, and women's inheriting of property, but our progress is slow and these

changes have met with great opposition from supporters of our religious and customary law. But that does not matter. Religion is as it is practised by people and not as it is recorded in unopened books.

I agree with you that modern Hinduism did not exist during the most glorious days of our ancestors, who were invaders and conquerors of India. But please remember that these Vedic Indo-Aryans were our ancestors as their Brahminic section were the ancestors of our present day Brahmins."

"Do you agree or not that the Vedas are the sacred and revealed books of the Hindus?" enquired the priest.

"They are the revealed books, true," replied the professor, "but it is difficult to say with authority that the Vedas we now have are the Vedas which were delivered by divinely inspired persons. The oldest Veda is the Rig-veda, composed about 1500 years B. C. and handed down orally. The copy from which the modern copy of this Veda is made is on paper, and paper was introduced into India by the Mohamedans in the twelfth century A.D. Till that time it was learnt by heart, I suppose, just as thousands of Muslims learn the

Qoran by heart. Mohammed died in 632 A.D. and every word of the Qoran was written down the moment it was revealed through him, and I have no doubt in my mind that our Vedas that we have to-day are as correct a reproduction of the original Vedas as any other religious books, including the Qoran and the Bible, are of their original copies.

“The earliest proof of any kind of Indian script found in India is Asoka’s pillar. There is nothing written which is Indian and which is older than this. Buddha rebelled against the Hindu religion as practised at the time. He had been brought up by his father with very great care and was allowed to see only beautiful and happy things of life. But the first day he strayed away from the palace he saw a beggar with sores and a funeral procession and an aged, decayed man. He did not know before, that these sad things existed in the world. He made up his mind to remove cruelty and unhappiness from the world. He hated animal sacrifices and became determined to purify the Hindu religion of all evil practices which in his opinion had crept in since the Vedas were composed. This difference of opinion started the religious reformations through the two contemporary

religious leaders, Gautama and Mahavira, whom we have already mentioned. Therefore you must remember, Punditji, that when you are talking of Hinduism to-day you must not labour under any delusions. Our modern Hinduism is a late development even later than Buddhism, since that religion also led to our progress in religious theories and principles."

"True, Professor," interjected the Brahmin, "but my point is that as there is a cry among modern Muslims 'Back to the Qoran,' we should have the cry 'Back to the Vedas,' so that we may again see the heyday of India of Vedic fame. The Muslims wish to go back to the Qoran because they have strayed away from their true path and evil practices have crept into their religious observances, and they feel that they would be all the better for shedding these, and so shall we, by going back to the true Vedas."

"You will be interested to know that the much-maligned caste system did not exist in Vedic times," remarked Goswami. "It is a later growth. The Rigveda does not mention the caste system at all. But the fact that Brahmins existed during those days and were present at all sacrifices and religious ceremonies

is responsible for the building up of the caste system later on."

"I agree," said the priest, "but all that I was trying to convey to you was that we should go back to the Vedas for whatever good we find in them and we should give up whatever evils we have acquired since we parted company with the Vedic teachings. Look at the existence of polyandry ; even though it is very rare, one cannot say it does not exist. This is not a Vedic institution at all. Although we find a mention in our sacred epic the Mahabharata of Darupadi, who was married to five brothers, it should be remembered that the Mahabharata, though containing references to historical facts, is essentially a fiction. The literary composition of this work may be placed circa 400 B.C. to 200 A.D. It is a much later work than the Vedas and the mere mention of Darupadi is no authority for holding that polyandry has a Vedic sanction. Since the Vedas do not mention it at all, the conclusion is that its origin is not Aryan. Only the later parts of the Mahabharata mention it, and these are not of Aryan origin. As a matter of fact, polyandry originated in the Himalayas and in Tibet ; it also existed under Dravidian civilization. India

is blamed for it because of the inclusion of these parts within our geographical limits. You find it practised mainly by families who live in the Himalayas. While they embraced our higher ethics and philosophy, they could not be divorced entirely from their past traditions and customary sanctions. Even the few and far between families that indulge in this habit now-a-days live up in the hills."

"This reminds me," interrupted the professor, "of last summer vacation when I was travelling through the Himalayas. Not far from a town I happened to halt in a village on the hill side, because the sun went down before I could reach my destination. One of the villagers very kindly offered me hospitality. I was rather tired and could not wake up early, and when I did wake up I had no energy left to pull myself out of bed. I lay there quietly, and my hostess, who was churning milk not far from my bed, and her daughter-in-law, who was talking to her, had no idea that I was listening to their conversation. I had no mind to play the eaves-dropper, but I could not help listening to what they were saying. The daughter-in-law—who had evidently been married a few days earlier to the eldest son

of the house—was heard questioning her mother-in-law if she had been married to the elder brother or to the younger, and when the old lady said ‘the elder,’ the young one retorted: ‘I won’t have it.’ ‘What do you mean?’ said the mother-in-law. ‘The first night my husband came into my room. The next night your second son came, and as I refused him he pestered me all night long. I won’t have it. I can’t stand it. I am not strong enough, my health will break down.’

“How has the institution of Brahminism affected our religion?” enquired Buta.

“We have sacrificed all our worldly existence,” said the priest, “and devoted our lives generation after generation to minister to the spiritual needs of our people, and had it not been for us our religion could not have been preserved in the grand manner in which it has been preserved.”

“May I talk freely for a few minutes?” enquired the professor.

“Certainly,” replied the priest.

“It is quite true that we owe everything spiritual to the Brahmins. Their sacrifices have been great, and if any of the laws lay down that charity is to be bestowed on the poor priest—

and the vast majority of the Brahmins are as poor as church mice—I do not grudge them a little wordly reward. . But there is no gainsaying the fact that in framing those laws the Brahmins made religion a special preserve of their own and did not allow any one else to interfere with their monopoly, and who could be better qualified than they to enjoy the exclusive right of acting as spiritual leaders of the people? I think I told you once before, Buta, that *Manu* laid down in his old law book that if a *Sudra*, i.e., half caste, heard a Veda his ears were to be stopped with molten tin or lac, and if he repeated the sacred texts his tongue was to be cut off, and if he stored the Vedas in his head his body was to be cut in twain. These laws were no doubt framed by the Brahmins for Buddha. It was their job to remember these sacred books by heart for thousands of years, generation after generation, and no legislator could do without their assistance. It made them a literary and learned class, but it also gave them a chance to amend the rules to their advantage, with the result that as things stand to-day you need a Brahmin for some ceremony or another from the moment you are born to the day you are cremated,



and every time you must pay and pay. I was walking along the bank of the holy Ganges at Hardwar last year. There was a Muslim professor with me. As we passed by a Brahmin who was seated on the footpath, naked but for a sparse jockey strap, he suddenly rose from his seat and started jumping up and down on the same spot. My Muslim friend was very surprised and asked me the reason for the man's strange behaviour. I told him that I had passed there in the morning and I saw a man feeding the Brahmin with sweets, and when he had polished off the plateful, the devotee gave the Brahmin two rupees for the great labour he had performed and for the spiritual service rendered by eating those sweets for him. The man took a promise from the Brahmin to eat another two pounds of sweets after a lapse of two hours, for which trouble he was to receive another two rupees. The time for the return of the man with sweets and two rupees had arrived and the Brahmin was trying to make room for more sweets. My Muslim friend told me that their priests have fixed certain days in the year when the spirits of the dead must be fed, and on those days all Muslims are supposed to cook the richest and

sweetest dishes possible and hand them to their *mulla*, and if the latter eats that food it is tantamount to the spirits of their dead relations having enjoyed the meal.

"Is it not a fact that even nowadays if a cow dies in the house the owner has to go into mourning? No wonder that every sensible person makes a present of his cow to a priest the moment he notices any signs of senility. If I had the power to frame laws I would make similar laws for the benefit of myself and my descendants. I do not blame the priests of all communities for having made these laws to their exclusive advantage, do you?"

"Oh! no, professor."

"What about a scheme for making India free, gentlemen?" enquired Ali.

"There is the only one other remedy left," suggested the professor.

"What is it?"

"We must divide India into two parts, in which the two nations can develop along their own lines side by side and remain the two eyes of mother India, equally becoming and equally useful and appreciated."

"They will no longer remain two eyes of the same body, professor," said the priest, "but

they might be likened to two sisters ruling in adjoining houses. I should have liked to have ruled over these Muslims to pay them back a bit of what they gave us while they ruled over India for over eight hundred years, but on the whole it is best to forget our past and face facts and do what is best for our country. I agree with you, professor, that the best thing for us all is to separate North-western India, where the Muslim culture, religion and script can have full scope, and leave the rest of India to the Hindus."

"What will you do with the Muslims in Bengal and Assam, Brahmin Sahib?" enquired Ali. "They form the majority there."

"You cannot join up Bengal with North-western India."

"No, Punditji, but you will have to make them into a separate country too."

"'Hey Ram,' where is this division of India going to land us? You will soon say that Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore and Cochin and other adjoining states should have a separate federation of their own."

"Why not, Punditji?" said Ali. "They are after all quite a different race from the Aryans who live in northern India (above an imaginary line drawn between Calcutta and Bombay).

**Their Dravidian origin, their languages and customs, make them as foreign to the Aryans as the Spaniards inhabiting South America are to the English-speaking people of North America."**

"It is true, Ali," remarked the Pundit, "but once you break up India into small bits you lose the whole charm that attaches to our great mother country. For the purpose of defence the Punjabi of a separated North-western India can shut his eyes to what an invader might do in Madras."

"Well, Punditji, if you do feel that divided we fall, then you must do something to win the confidence of the Mussalman."

"How can we do that, when he is always joining hands with the white man to fight against us, the Hindus?"

"You must realise that he does that perhaps because he feels that under a white man's government he receives better treatment than he would under a Hindu government."

"It is not quite that, it is mainly because the white man is in power and he can give more jobs and show favour to the Muslim political leaders that we Hindus can."

"What do you mean?"

"The white man by agreeing to concede to the Muslims' demands for a definite share in the services and separate electorates keeps the Muslims on his side."

"If the Hindus know that the Muslims are getting these things out of a white government, why don't you Hindus agree to give us the same thing with good grace? If your claim is that you want India for Indians, why should you worry if Muslim Indians get what they want? After all, they are Indians."

"That is true, Ali," said the Brahmin, "but that means giving way to a minority who wish to extract political rights and guarantees at the point of the pistol. This tyranny by minorities cannot be tolerated."

"You are willing to sacrifice the future of your country but you are not willing to appease your Muslim countrymen."

"What do you Muslims want, what is it that can appease you or grease you?"

"First of all, we want a certain proportion fixed for Muslims in the services. In the case of all-India services, only 25 per cent. in accordance with our ratio to the whole population."

"This is a vicious principle. Why should

not the Muslims come in through the open door of competition ?”

“ For the simple reason that when the British took over the administration of the country from the Muslims they were specially favourable towards the Hindus, with the result that you have stolen a march upon us in education. Moreover, we live in the country and you are of the towns, where educational facilities are better. I am quite willing that Muslims should be recruited by competition *inter se*. ”

“ If you are willing to have competition among yourselves why don't you compete with Hindu boys ? ”

“ Shall I tell you the truth Punditji ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Because a great deal of hanky-panky goes on when the papers are marked by examiners who are mostly Hindus. ”

“ Then why not agree to nomination of Muslims ? ”

“ Because I know of cases where Hindu officers have selected the least qualified Muslims so that they can later on in life be all the more easily superseded by better-qualified Hindus. ”

“ Punditji, you must not forget that the Muslim of India is very distrustful of us Hindus, ”

remarked Buta. " And I do not blame him. Ali and I went into a government office at Delhi the other day to look up a pal of ours, and we discovered that out of 1100 men working there only 33 were Muslims. The appointing officer had always been a Hindu. It is no use securing home rule for a divided India. It will only mean someone else walking into our country. Why can't we satisfy the Muslim in all his demands ? We have the case of Egypt, where the Copts, the Egyptian Christians, being only five per cent. of the population, demanded fifteen per cent in services and the Egyptian Muslim leader closed his eyes and signed all the demands, with the result that the Copts are now more patriotic than the Muslims. We must make the Muslims believe that if India is self-governing then their new rulers in the elected parliaments where Hindus will have the predominant voice being seventy-five per cent. of the population will treat them at least as well as they are treated by the white rulers of to-day. If we cannot win the confidence of our Muslim brothers, then we do not deserve to rule the country. We had better split it up. If several petty republics in South America can remain independent countries why can't we

have a few separate governments in India ? Why should we resent agreeing to all that the Muslims want, no matter how fantastic their demand ? They are after all Indians, and if power passes partly into their hands from a foreign people, it will be going into Indian hands all the same. When we do not agree to their demands, they naturally draw the conclusion that we want power to pass from the white bureaucracy into the hands of a Hindu bureaucracy. I am all for meeting Muslim demands, else we must split India. If we are not willing to agree to either of these courses, we must submit to the inevitable and let India be ruled by foreigners for ever."

" If we split India into separate Hindu and Muslim zones, Buta, what will happen to the people interspersed in the provinces ?" enquired Goswami.

" They will either have to make the best of a bad job or migrate to the provinces where they feel that they are likely to be more happy. You must not forget that Muslims, although only 25 per cent. in the whole of India, constitute the vast majority in North-western India, about 70 per cent. with a total of nearly fifty million people. We cannot ignore their good-



will or their support in the defence problem of India. If they are a discontented minority in India, they will probably join hands with the first invader from the north. We must make them feel happy either as a contented minority or as a happy and peaceful neighbour. This talk of self-determination is all humbug. Suppose you put eighty million Germans and forty million Frenchmen or 30 million Poles, into one country and then said let the majority of votes decide. Could any sane person in the world expect the French or the Poles to agree ?

“How can we agree to all their demands, Buta ? They want separate electorates for themselves.”

“Do you blame them, Punditji ?” said Buta. “The moment we Hindus win their confidence we shall find that Muslims themselves will give up separate electorates. It is very wrong of us to press for the abolition of separate electorates. This will make them more suspicious than ever. You must not forget that our strained relations are proof of nothing short of the fact that here in India there are two separate nations living together, with different religions, different cultures, different civil laws, different

scripts, and never inter-marrying. Marriages between Hindus and Muslims are illegal. The personal law of neither permits such mixed marriages. A couple must either be married under the Hindu law, in which case the boy and the girl must both be Hindus, or under the Muslim law, in which case they must both be Muslims with the limited exception in favour of the girl keeping her Christian or Jewish religion, these two religions being accepted as of "The Book." Orthodox Hindus do not even dine together with Muslims, leave alone the question of marriages. At all railway stations you see separate refreshment rooms for Muslims and Hindus. Never will a Muslim be allowed to go and dine in a Hindu refreshment room, nor even a Christian. At every railway station there have to be separate water carriers for Hindus and Muslims. In the summer you hear them shout : 'Water for Hindus.' 'Water for Muslims.' The stock of water for the two people is kept in two far-apart corners of the railway station, with clear sign-boards indicating which community the water belongs to, and God help the Muslim who even by mistake pollutes the Hindu water pitchers by touching them or by going near them. Never can you see a Hindu buying

sweets or eatables from the shop of a Muslim. This boycott of Muslim shopkeepers by Hindus has continued throughout centuries past and has weighed heavily against Muslim trade and business. The Muslims bury their dead, the Hindus burn them. You can tell from the name of a man whether he is a Muslim or a Hindu. Can you think of any country in the world where from his name you can tell whether he belongs to one religion or another? With these deep-rooted differences in the background, if any political party wishes to adopt the position where it can totally ignore the feelings and opinions of the other party and claim for itself the privileged position of being the sole mouth-piece of the Indian peoples, all that one can say is that if the pigeon closes its eyes the cat does not cease to see it. In these circumstances the claim by a Muslim organization that it represents also the Hindus of India or vice versa would make even a donkey laugh.

How can we ignore these facts in any settlement of the future political problems of India? By being a subject race for over eight hundred years, some of us seem to have lost the main quality of rulers—generosity. Unless there is among us a will to give we shall never deserve

co-operation, trust and friendliness. Whatever the political demands of the Muslims are, we should grant them at once. After all, what we agree to will be mere paper guarantees, and what have these meant even in the case of most honourable and trustworthy nations? No Government can bind its successors. All parliaments are supreme in their own times. What use are all these paper guarantees in the future? Have paper guarantees in the past not been honoured more in their breach than in their observance?"

"It seems to me, Buta, that splitting up India into at least four separate federations is the only way out of the difficulty."

"True, Punditji, but what about the defence of India?" remarked Ali. "Think of the one glorious and grand Indian defence force, customs barrier, and economic and financial machinery. She will be the most respected country in the world. Divide her up into four petty little portions, and each will be the prey of the first marauder who wants to violate her independence.

"North-western India has no mineral wealth. All the heavy industry dependent on coal and iron will be concentrated in Bombay, Bihar and

Bengal. The fighting races of the North will always find it very tempting to have a share of this natural wealth and industrial production, and we shall be having internecine quarrels and little wars like the South American republics. The only solution is that India must remain united and the Hindus must win over the confidence of the Muslims. The politicians at Delhi will probably give all the commissioned ranks to high caste fellows, but we can get over the difficulty by laying down that every one must join the ranks before he can be promoted after having proved his merit for a commission."

The professor, who had been listening most carefully remarked :

"If it is your wish that India should remain united then there is only one way out of the difficulty."

"What is it, Sir?"

"India must adopt the Communist creed. The Muslims being poor will all join in. The vast majority of the Hindus living in the villages will also come in willingly, and then to hell with all the rich Hindus at the top who now stand in the way of Hindu-Muslim unity."

"Hey Ram! For God's sake, professorji, do not preach Communism," entreated the

Brahmin. "What will happen to religion and the literary classes? There will be an end of all culture, arts, and all civilisation."

"Out of ruins will arise a new garden" replied Goswami, "more worthy of existence than its predecessor, in which the flower, the fruit tree, the grass, the shade-giving tree, were all laid low by the fungi of mutual distrust jealousy, religious bigotry, and political shortsightedness."

"I agree with what the professor has just said" answered Ali. "A poor Muslim boy once stood up in the mosque at Mecca and addressed the Caliph Omar thus: 'I have only one shirt. Why are you wearing two? How did you get the second? Your share is only one.' And the Caliph replied: 'I had fever last night and my brother very kindly lent me his shirt to wear while I came to preach here to-day.' Although Islam endeavours to level up inequalities, yet it permits private property, and to this extent Islam will not accept Communism. But the great danger is that many Muslims are poverty-stricken and own no property. With their spirit of equality they are liable to fall into the lap of Communism if the Hindu upper classes are not careful'."

"Professor, professor, then Islam and Communism are a great danger. Save us, save us. Do what you can now, before it is too late. Everything will go down the gutter. For God's sake tell my people to wake up, and if they won't then pray for them to be guided on the right path."

"God can only show you the right path," said Ali. "It is for us to follow. The choice must be ours."

"In my opinion," said the professor, "the white man is at the bottom of all our troubles."

"In what way?" enquired Ali.

"He will never agree to the division of India, for in that case Hindus and Muslims will both become contented and settle down peacefully in their separate parts. He wants to keep us both inside one geographical unit so that we can go on quarrelling and he can successfully rule over us by keeping us at loggerheads with each other."

"I am not quite sure of that," remarked Ali. "Don't you think he is rather proud of the fact that he has made India into one grand administrative unit and he wishes to keep it intact? If he were really Machiavellian, he would immediately agree to a division of India, for each separated part of India would be more than ever

dependent on England for defence and other purposes, and each separated part would be in a very weak position vis-a-vis England in questions concerning further and further devolution of power from Britain to India. It is much more difficult for England to withstand the onslaught of civil disobedience from the whole of India than to cope with sporadic outbursts of opposition in different parts at different times and on a small scale."

"Perhaps you are right."

"What about inter-marriages as a solution of our political ills?" enquired Ali.

"I agree that inter-marriages are desirable, no matter what any religion says, and if religion is a stumbling-block in the path of our unity and progress, I would see it abolished, but the question is how to encourage inter-marriages," said Buta.

"You can never abolish religion," said the professor.

"Why not?"

"Have you not heard what an Indian god decided a few years ago?"

"No, Sir."

"This god was standing on the summit of Mount Everest and looking across India when



suddenly he saw a man pass along the foot-path in front of him. 'Who are you, my man?' enquired the god. 'I am a Scotch missionary, Sir'. 'What do you want?' 'I want money, Sir.' 'Money you shall have. Pass on.' Later on this god saw another man, and put the same questions to him. The man replied that he was an Englishman and that he wanted power. 'Power you shall have. Pass along.' Then this god noticed another human creature sneaking behind him. 'Who are you?' enquired this deity. 'I am an Indian, Sir.' 'What do you want?' 'I want religion, Sir.' 'Religion you shall have in plenty, my man. Pass along.'

It is for this reason, my friends, that we are always having an overdose of religion."

"We are lucky in the Punjab," remarked Ali, "that religion is divorced from the State. No religious education is imparted in any of the government or local body schools and Government as such has nothing to do with places of worship."

"What about the anecdote the professor has just told us?" commented the priest.

"My anecdote is as true in the Punjab as it is elsewhere in India. In spite of the Government ban on religious affairs, my Punjabi

brethren belonging to all faiths have set up sectarian, religious and communal schools to perpetuate the evil we wish to eradicate."

"The only way to bring about national unity is to allow co-education and to abolish communal and sectarian colleges and to educate our women. If only we can do this we shall be one nation in two or three generations," summed up Ali.

"What would the priests be doing all this time?" enquired Buta.

"I should like to take them all up in an aeroplane and drop them one and all in the Indian Ocean during heavy monsoon weather," was Ali's solution.

"Supposing we cannot bring about Hindu-Muslim unity, what else can we do to make India free?" asked the Brahmin. "We can never get over the fact that Muslims and Hindus are two separate nations living in the same country, each sticking to its own culture in a most uncompromising manner. If we go on like this we shall never be free."

Ali was getting tired of this meaningless conversation. He was keen on explaining the means by which Indian unity could be achieved and achieved quickly before it was too late to

save mother India from other impending calamities. He was becoming restless and reversed the topic of the conversation.

"Can you suggest anything, professor, which will really unite Hindus and Muslims?"

"That is the crux of the whole question," commented the priest.

"No, I must confess I have no quick and sure remedy for this, the greatest of all our ills."

"Buta and I have often thought of this too."

"Have you found a panacea yet?"

"We are both agreed that inter-marriages between Hindus and Muslims are the only thing which will make us one nation."

"Hey Ram, Hey Ram (my God, my God)" interjected the priest. "God save India and our religion from the unprincipled modern youth. Your unholy conversation is not fit for my ears. How can a Hindu marry a Muslim woman and still remain a Hindu? It is a preposterous suggestion. May God forgive me for having sat with you for so long, I am off. Good-bye."

"Good riddance!" remarked the professor. "Ali, tell us what is your idea of inter-marriages."

By this time the priest, who had just left

felt that in his absence the professor might spoil the mind of a young Hindu in Buta, whose soul he felt it his sacred duty to save. So he thought better of it and turned back, and after saying that he had returned to see if he had left any of his books there (he had them under his arm all the time) he planted himself in his old chair again.

"I feel," replied Ali, "that the modern Muslim prejudice against marrying Hindu ladies is not Islamic."

"Do you mean to say that Islam permits a Muslim to marry a Hindu?"

"Yes, professor."

"Never heard such a concoction of lies in my life," said the priest angrily.

"Tell them what the Islamic law is, Ali," remarked Buta.

"According to the Qoran every Muslim (man) can marry a woman—without her changing her religion—provided she belongs to a religion of the Book, *i.e.*, a revealed book. Muslims can marry, and do marry, Jewish and Christian women and their marriages are lawful. These marriages are recognised all over the Muslim world, because there is no doubt that the

Bible and the Talmud are revealed books and mentioned in the Qoran as such."

"What does the Qoran say about marriages with Hindu women?" enquired the priest.

"Although the Vedas are not mentioned, the Qoran says; 'Oh Mohammed, there is not a nation in the world to whom we have not sent a prophet,' and in another place it says: 'If it had been our will we could have made the whole world of one religion.' It was not possible for the Qoran to mention each religion of a revealed book. Even the Brahmanji will not suggest that the Hindu Vedas are not divinely inspired books."

"Of course not, I claim that our books are as much revealed as the books of the Jews, Christians and Muslims," asserted the priest.

"If your claim is true, as I am sure it is, then marriages between Muslim men and Hindu women should take place without either of the parties having to change their religion," intervened Buta.

"Then tell me, Ali, why don't the Indian Muslims marry Hindu women?" enquired the professor.

"I think Sir, the lack of will is on the side of the Hindu women. There are no opportunities

for our young people to see each other. I feel that with the Hindu brain and the Muslim body we could produce an even better race of people than we are at the moment. The modern Muslim has strayed away from the Qoran and that is why he is so much in trouble. If Indian Muslims had followed Akbar the Great's example we should have been one nation."

"What did he do?" enquired the priest.

"He married a Hindu princess, Jodha Bai of Sambhar, which is forty miles from Jaipur."

"Hey Ram, Hey Ram," moaned the priest.

"That is not the end of it. From this Hindu princess he had a son, Jehangir, who became the Emperor of India and defender of the faith. My co-religionists must either admit that marriages with Hindu women are lawful or concede that one of the Moghul Emperors was—well, I don't like to say what."

"Perhaps the princess became a Muslim," said the professor.

"As far as we know, all proofs are to the contrary, Sir. You can go to Fatchpur Sikri to-day, and among the ruins of Akbar's palace you will still see the remains of his Hindu Queen's temple. You can see the route by which she used to go to bathe in the holy waters

of the sacred tank. There is no reference in contemporary European or Indian historical authorities that this princess or any other princess who married a Muslim prince embraced Islam. Such a course would have been against the general policy of toleration pursued by Akbar and his son—born of a Hindu mother—Jehangir. If any of these princesses had ever been converted to Islam it is hardly conceivable that such an important event would not have been recorded when we know that the minutest details of the royal families' doings were penned every day by court historians. We know of an existing case where a Hindu Minister of a Muslim prince is married to a Muslim lady who is a Syed and claims direct descent from the tribe to which the Holy Prophet of Islam belonged. We are told that she has not changed her religion nor has he. There must have been many similar instances during Akbar's time. Who was going to question the legitimacy of children when persons of high position were involved? Was there a Muslim theologian or lawyer who was prepared to question the Moghul Emperor or what he did? Abul Fazal has referred to the marriage of Akbar with Jodha Bai, the daughter of Behari Lal, but he says nothing

about conversion. Nor do Badaoni and Nizamuddin advert to it. On the other hand, we must not forget that these princesses received also Muslim names and wore Muslim dress as did also the Hindu menfolk who were at the Moghul court and were buried instead of being burnt. To suggest from these facts that they were converted to Islam is mere conjecture. Jehangir's marriage with Man Bai, daughter of Bhagwan Das, is referred to by every contemporary historian. Badaoni mentions specifically that the marriage was performed in the presence of Kazis and nobles and a dowry (*Mahar*) of two *Karas Tankas* was fixed, and that all the customary ceremonies of Hindus, *e.g.*, burning fire, etc., were observed. Man Bai was also buried and not cremated.

“Circumstantial evidence strongly supports the presumption that these ladies were accorded by their husbands the fullest liberty to observe their own religious practices. The carvings in Jehangir Mahal in Agra Fort support this view. The personal law—which meant the personal will—of the Emperor prevailed and not the Muslim law, and I do wish the modern Indians could undertake legislation to legalise inter-marriages.”



“But this is not fair,” commented the priest. “Islam allows Muslim men to marry Hindu women in order to increase their numbers, but does not allow Muslim women to marry Hindu men.”

“That is so, but cases do occur where Muslim women have married Hindus, but these have always renounced their faith first.”

“Why?”

“Under the Indian law you can either celebrate marriages under Hindu, Muslim or Christian laws, in which case both parties must always belong to the same faith, or under the Registration of Marriages Act, which demands that both parties must declare before marriage that they are neither Hindus nor Muslims nor Christians. I know of a case where a Hindu merchant in Calcutta married a Muslim girl, under this Act, and a few years later she and her four children and husband all became Muslims perhaps they were ostracized by the Hindu society. I know of cases where Hindu women married Muslims but embraced Islam first.”

“Would you allow a Hindu to remain a Hindu if he married a Muslim woman and would you consider her children Hindus?” enquired the professor.

“Hey Ram, Hey Ram, how can that be?” replied the Brahmin.

"Then it is not the fault of the Muslim women if they do not marry Hindus," replied the professor.

"Why don't you convert them to Hinduism?" enquired Buta.

"There are some advanced Hindus who do permit conversion, but according to our orthodox doctrines you can only be born a Hindu."

By this time they were all sick of the conversation and were glad to break up the party.

When Buta arrived at his home, he found that his mother was talking to Gulshan.

"You are late for your meal, my son. Was the train not up to time?"

"The train was punctual, but Goswami asked me and Ali to a cup of tea, and you know the maniac he is, we just could not get away."

"He is not married yet."

"No."

"I wish he would marry my sister. She is a widow, but he is getting on in years."

"He is not the marrying sort, mother. He is quite balmy. It would be a shame to tie up my aunt to a lunatic like that."

"What has he been up to?"

"His usual stuff about meat-eating and freedom of India."

“Come and sit down and I will give you your food. Why did you not bring Ali with you?”

“He has come to fetch his mother, who arrived here yesterday to pay a condolence visit to one of her brothers-in-law. His child died last week.”

“What did the professor say about meat eating?” enquired Gulshan.

“He pointed out to me the dove, the pigeon, the deer, the sheep, the goat, and several other herbivorous animals. He tried to impress upon me that all these animals were timid and cowardly because they lived on vegetation. Then he gave me the examples of the eagle, the hawk, the tiger and the wolf, all carnivorous, brave and ferocious. He followed up by suggesting that nature had provided human beings with a system which could digest and assimilate both kinds of food, and the result of this combination was that the human race were animals no doubt, but on account of the mixed food they ate their cruel propensities engendered by their meat-eating habit had been modified by the vegetarian part of their diet, and this modification had turned their ferocity and cruelty into merciful bravery.”

“How very true, Buta,” remarked his mother.

## CHAPTER VI

Marjorie was only eight years old. She was the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln and the sole source of their joy and entertainment. They loved seeing her play, and read and talk to them, fondle them and help them to forget their surroundings and the thoughts of their home in England, a place they loved so truly. They needed no cinemas, no theatres, so long as their daughter was with them. One morning Marjorie woke up in Jamalpur feeling rather sluggish. Mother brought out a thermometer from her bag and found that her temperature was  $99.5^{\circ}$ . "Perhaps she has been playing in the sun or perhaps her bowels need a clean-up", said Mrs. Lincoln to herself. "Perhaps the cook had not boiled the drinking water properly, or perhaps he had upset the pot and filled it with unboiled water instead, and that might have been the cause of possible infection." She immediately sent for the District Board doctor in charge of the dispensary at Bhalwal. This gentleman had been educated at the

Medical School, Amritsar, from where three hundred of them passed out every year. They were not medical graduates but were only licentiates. They had a second-rate education, for the Government wanted cheap doctors for the villages. For better hospitals Government recruited medical graduates who passed out of King Edward Medical College, Lahore. There were always about twelve hundred students in that College, which had a first class five-year course. It was perhaps the best medical college in the whole of the East.

The Sub-Assistant Surgeon from Bhalwal, which was only eleven miles away, arrived without the least delay, and after a careful examination came out with the cheerful opinion that there was nothing wrong with the girl and that she would be all right the next day. He promised to send a bottle of quinine mixture from Bhalwal.

As Marjorie lay in bed with the slight temperature, Sher Khan stood by her bedside, with both hands folded in front of him, his head bent a little to the right. He looked very serious, and wore an expression almost as puzzled as that of the family doctor who, nonplussed by the ailment, assumes the proverbial reticence of the

wise man hearing much and saying little. After a long and comtemplative gaze at Marjorie, Sher Khan lifted his head, and turning to Mrs. Lincoln said :

“Mem Sahib, I should have warned you long ago. It is my fault. How foolish of me not to have mentioned it to you. How can you, an English woman, ever understand these things ? I am sorry. I am sorry.”

“What do you mean, Sher Khan ? I do not understand you.”

“Well, Mem Sahib, there is a blacksmith in this village, by name Jamroo, who is reputed throughout these parts to possess an evil eye of a very severe nature. Several cases have occurred in his lifetime where people have suffered from his stare. He was here the other day when you arrived and I noticed that he was looking intently at Marjorie Baba, his mouth half open in bewilderment at her beauty and charm. I heard him remark to his neighbour ; ‘How sweet and clever the child is.’ I immediately spat at Marjorie Baba, of course on the back of her coat, and repeated in my mind the customary sentences : ‘She is ugly. She is filthy. Go away from her, evil eye and evil spirit, do not come near her. You are mistaken

Go away. She is poor. She is no use. Nobody likes her,' I knew that on that occasion the timely action I took had warded off the evil, but this man Jamroo has an evil eye which pierces and sears all things like lightning. If he looks at a stone it will break asunder. He once looked at a neighbour's cow and remarked on the size of her udder. That very night the udder-skin burst and the animal had to be taken to a veterinary hospital and sewn up. He once looked at a small spaniel puppy belonging to a police officer. This little creature, though only six months old, had so cleverly retrieved a partridge which its master had shot, that everyone was amazed at the skill she displayed while still so young. Jumroo stared at her in admiration. Within a few minutes she was kicked by a horse and her ribs were smashed. When people contract a lingering disease, as a result of his evil eye, then something can be done because there is time to take action. We usually go to our great spiritual leaders, such as the *mulla* of the mosque, and he writes out certain charms on small pieces of paper. We soak one of these overnight in pure cold water, pour out the water into an unused earthen cup and in the morning before

sunrise we drink that water and also eat the paper. It staves off the effect of the evil eye and often cures other diseases too. We call it faith healing. I have known several women possessed by the devil and so suffering from hysteria successfully cured by this charm drinking. In my village there was a somnambulist shopkeeper who was restored to perfect health by this means."

"But, Sher Khan, you have just said that you took the precaution of spitting at my daughter. Then why do you insinuate that Jamroo has anything to do with her fever?"

"You do not remember, but I do, Mem Sahib, that a day later when you and the baba were both sitting under that shady tree at the edge of the courtyard and the *khidmatgar* (Butler) brought the baba's milk in a white tumbler, he did not take the precaution of wrapping it in a napkin, nor did he turn his back on the crowd to prevent them from looking at the pure whiteness of the milk while your child was drinking it. I am afraid someone's child must have stared avidly at the baba and wished for a similar drink of milk. This covetous look is also supposed to have a very evil effect. I



remember that Jamroo was present too at that time, and although he was a little distance away I fear he was also staring at Marjorie baba. Mem Sahib, the white colour is very susceptible to the effects of an evil eye. Our womenfolk always cover the glass with an apron when giving milk to their children in the open in front of others. They cover it even if there is no one in sight, for who knows that some woman from the roof of a neighbouring house may not be looking at the whiteness of the milk? The white colour can be seen in the open from a good distance, because our drinking bowls are flat and their surface is wide. But do not worry, Mem Sahib, Missy Baba will be all right. She has only fever."

That evening Sher Khan went to pray at the mosque, and when all the faithful were moving out of the courtyard he stood at the door where people had left their shoes before entering the holy precincts. He had hurried out after his own prayers so as to be there before the rest of the worshippers left the mosque. He had, along with the rest of the congregation, been praying in the mosque, and towards the end of the service, when they had all raised their hands up to the Almighty in dead silence,

he had spoken out loudly ; " Oh ye faithful, please pray that Almighty God may grant health to all those who are ill, and particularly to the daughter of my Sahib." After wiping the palms of both his hands on his face from the forehead downward, as if to smear it with the light of God which must have descended from heaven and poured on to his outstretched hands, he ran out to catch the men before they left the mosque. He held in his hand a small earthen cup with a little water in it, and as each man walked out of the mosque he blew a whiff of his breath on to this water, symbolical of his desire that all virtues that may have descended upon him on account of his prayer might by this act stand transmitted into that water, which thereafter was supposed to become holy and to contain the potency of removing the effects of an evil eye or of counteracting other kinds of evil which might have been dominating the body of any human being, sick or healthy. Sher Khan carried this water carefully back to the tent and suggested to Mrs. Lincoln that she should give it to the child to drink. His mistress, wanting neither to disappoint Sher Khan nor to give the water to her child, requested Sher Khan to leave it on the

table near the child's bed, because she was resting. When next morning Sher Khan noticed that the water was still there untouched, he sighed with relief that the Mem Sahib had not thrown away the holy water, since that would have been a sacrilegious thing to do and might have involved the spilling of the prayers of so many good-hearted Muslims and God-fearing men on to the ground. Realising that the mother, who was always so careful of what her child ate, would never let her drink the water, he poured it over the palms of his hands, and as the baba was asleep he passed his hands over the bedding and sprinkled a few drops on the girl's hair so as not to penetrate to her skin and awaken her. Mrs. Lincoln later noticed that the holy water was not there and thought that Sher Khan might have given it to Marjorie to drink. With a very calm and patient demeanour she enquired of Sher Khan what had happened to the water, as if she was sorry at its disappearance and would have liked to have given it to her daughter. Sher Khan told her what he had done with it, and Mrs. Lincoln heaved a sigh of relief.

The low fever persisted for a day or two. Mrs. Lincoln felt that perhaps it was typhoid

para A, in which case she was quite clear that it would be dangerous to move her daughter at all. She knew well that in such cases the patient must be kept still and constantly fed, particularly on fruit-juices, the main object being to keep up the strength. Oranges could be bought from a small town ten miles away near a railway station. A horseman could easily go and fetch some.

But in spite of the care and feeding which Marjorie could receive in the village her mother decided that she must take her back to Sargodha at once. James Lincoln also counselled Dorothy to take the girl back to headquarters. There was no way out of it. If the child remained in the village it was a sure and slow death for her. It meant a constant torture for the parents particularly for her mother, who was nightly strung and psychic. Ever since the day she had received a call to the East she had been very queer. She had led a very spiritual life and was susceptible to the influences of all unusual occurrences.

An improvised litter was immediately prepared and Marjorie placed in it. It was too late to catch the morning train at Bhalwal so they decided not to waste another twenty-four hours at

Jamalpur but to take Marjorie back to Sargodha by road all the way. She was to be taken back to the headquarters with necessary rests and feeds on the way. Her mother, who rode on horseback at her side, had her eyes constantly fixed on the little cloth curtain which protected her child against the sun. She was all the time on the look-out in case there was the slightest movement of Marjorie's hands to show that she was uncomfortable or thirsty. Sher Khan, the trusted servant, was with her. He was always appealing to the men who carried the litter to walk gently and slowly and not to jerk it. He often looked at Marjorie with tears in his eyes and his mouth gaping, for he felt as much as Dorothy the trouble that the little girl was undergoing. As a matter of fact, Dorothy was much more brave than Sher Khan in this respect. She kept up her courage wonderfully well.

The quickest and most comfortable way to reach the headquarters was by road, as there were no trains that day which suited the party. Sargodha was over thirty miles away from Jamalpur, and the journey was long and tedious. After they had travelled some distance in dead silence and gloom Mrs. Lincoln felt that she might say a word or two to Sher Khan.

“How are your children, Sher Khan?”

“Quite well, thank you. Perhaps you know that I had none from my first wife, Mem Sahib, but by the grace of God I have four from my second wife. She is only twenty-five now and I married her when she was eighteen. I am myself getting on to sixty, but the girl I married was a widow and her parents were quite willing to give their consent to her union with me, because even though she was young she was a widow. Her husband had died of pneumonia. He was out in the fields on irrigation duty and had only a cotton shirt on. The canal water is icy cold during winter nights. It comes from the top of snow-covered hills and the poor farmers stand in it with naked feet and they never have any woollen garments. They always wear cotton. I have no hesitation in telling you that the fact that I was a servant of the Sahib greatly facilitated matters, for my prestige stands high, and one or two of the local dignitaries whom I had treated with consideration when they came to pay their respects to the Sahib helped me a great deal in achieving my object. With God's grace and the Sahib's kindness I am now the happiest man on God's earth. I read the Qoran every morning after prayers, which I

say five times a day regularly at the appointed hours. I cannot pay the Almighty enough attention for all the great mercies and kindnesses which He has showered upon me. I fully realise what a boon my master's service has been to me, not only because I get regular salary and handsome tips, but I benefit in a thousand and one other ways."

"You are a man of a religious turn of mind, Sher Khan."

"Yes. I take a little interest in matters religious, and whenever I go to the mosque I always try and listen to what the *mulla* has to say. Mem Sahib, I have something to tell you. It has been lying very heavily on my mind for some days."

"Yes, what is it, Sher Kahn?"

"I didn't like your living in that tent."

"Why?"

Mrs. Lincoln was rather frightened and spoke as if she had been suddenly awakened from a siesta.

"I did not want to tell you this, Mem Sahib, but now that you have commanded me to tell you I have no hesitation in obeying. There was an English officer of the Irrigation Department who when out touring used the

tent under which you and the baba have been sleeping. He was camping near the ruins of an old town not far from a canal waterfall. The waterfall made a constant din and noise such as is likely to invite the spirits of unseen ghosts. Near the tent where this officer was stopping for the night there was a tree under which used to live a Muslim saint, who spent the whole night in prayer. Occasionally he prayed so loudly that he could be heard a good distance away. He constantly shouted 'Haq Allah, Haq Allah'—God is truth—and sometimes: 'Allah hoo, Allah hoo'—God is He. Sometimes he was heard barking like a dog and I am told that that was because he imagined himself at the door of God trying to bark like a dog belonging to God. This was just to signify his humility, and he told people that if he could be taken as a dog of God Almighty he would consider himself the most honourable creature in the world. But his prayers and appeals to the Almighty at night irritated the Canal Officer, who did not understand what the man was doing, but felt that the fellow was mad and unreasonable in preventing him from going to sleep. He fell into a rage and walked up to the hut of this *faqir* and kicked him.



The *faqir* turned round and cursed him, saying that thirteen white dwellers in that tent would come to grief before his curse worked itself out. The next morning the Sahib fell of his horse and broke his leg. Another officer who used that tent was bitten by a mad dog. Our baba is the ninth case.

“It is my fault, it is my fault. I should not have allowed the tent to be brought here. But to tell you the truth I felt that a tent could have nothing to do with these things, everything is from God, and if He does not will it nothing can happen, and if He wills it, it will happen tent or no tent. But still, I should have been on the safe side, Mem Sahib.”

“Never mind, Sher Khan. Baba has only a slight fever, and she will be all right soon. The moment we reach the headquarters and doctors attend to her she will get better.”

“You white people have no faith in these things, Mem Sahib, but we believe in the efficacy of prayer. We believe that if one is not holy enough to have his prayer answered he should approach for assistance someone whose prayer is heard. It is like this. If a farmer cannot see the Sahib, he must come to me and I arrange things for him. Similarly if sinners cannot

reach the Almighty they must enlist the support and service of a holy man. I have been told that God says in the Qoran that He is nearer to every person than his wind-pipe, and that if a man walks a yard towards Him, He will walk two in order to meet the man. Our saints have also said that God never rejects a prayer which is accompanied by a tear of sincerity. You know Mem Sahib, even prostitutes will go into heaven !”

“ Why ?”

“ Because most of them when they rise early in the morning sing praises of God in most melodious voices and tears come flowing down their cheeks. Whether it is a daily immersion in pornographic remorse or true repentance—even though momentary—we shall not probe deeply, but that their tears prove the sincerity of their prayer and they must therefore achieve their final salvation. But in spite of all these injunctions of the Qoran in favour of seeking a direct approach to God, I like being on the safe side and always say that one should pray directly and approach through an intermediary at the same time.

“ Where is the harm in trying to make things doubly safe ? I know a saint who can cure all

sorts of ailments by prayer and faith, but I suppose you would not approach him, would you Mem Sahib? No white woman or man has ever been known to do what I am suggesting."

"Never mind, Sher Khan. Let us get to the headquarters and perhaps the fever will leave Marjorie. Do you know of anyone who is a real saint and a really religious man?"

Mrs. Lincoln's heart was aching all the time. She did not wish to talk at all. As a matter of fact she was only listening to Sher Khan but not following much of what he was saying. Sher Khan had once heard that if people talked to each other when travelling by road the journey was likely to pass quickly. Not realizing that Mrs. Lincoln wanted to be quiet, he kept up an unending conversation. Dorothy on the other hand did not wish to stop him for she felt that his talk would make the journey interesting for the men who carried the litter.

"Mem Sahib, nowadays we do not get the same kind of great saints as are buried at Ajmere, Sirhind, Pakpattan, Lahore and Taunsa. They were godly men. It was their example and influence which brought the whole of north-western India within the fold of Islam. If the rulers had used force no one could have

refused to purchase their necks by a mere verbal statement that they had accepted Islam. If force had been used can you imagine that the whole territory round about the Moghul capital at Delhi could have remained Hindu, as is the case to-day? The adjoining districts of the Punjab—Gurgaon, Rohtak, Hissar, and Ambala are all predominantly Hindu. So are also the similar districts of the United Provinces. You cannot bribe an intelligent person to change his faith. There is a story that a Moghul nobleman who had no issue decided to expend his fortune in the proselytising of non-Muslims. One of his agents went to a farmer in the Ludhiana District and invited him to accept Islam. The peasant was told that he would receive fifty rupees per head converted. He collected all his nephews and nieces and marched off to the Ludhiana mosque, and after the ceremony was over he refused to take the money. When asked the reason he said that the man who had converted him and his family to Islam the previous year gave him eighty rupees per head, and that he was not prepared to accept a reduced price.

“Even now the order of Sufis” (mystics) is not dead. They are spread about all over

the Islamic world, and I am told that they have their counterparts in other religious fraternities also, but they alone know of their existence, nobody else does. It is a sort of great secret order. Among them, I am told, there are governors and sub-governors of various parts of the world, and they exercise their powers for the spiritual benefit of those who deserve their assistance. They are gifted with the power to see unseen things. They can look into the future and they even control the conferment of kingships in this world, but from behind the scenes, so that nobody knows anything about them. In the Qoran God says: 'I confer honours on whomsoever I will and I disgrace whomsoever I will.' Everything emanates from God. If God has conferred the governance of India on anyone, it is not for us to rebel against it. When the day comes that the present rulers no longer deserve to rule in this country, God will issue orders for them to be replaced by some other ruler. God issues these orders through these saints."

"Do you know of any of these saints who wield this spiritual political power and who can influence the course of events? I mean truly spiritual men, of whom you can talk from your own experience?"

“There are many all over the country, Mem Sahib, but this order is secret. It is not easy to find out their whereabouts. They move about from place to place in an unobserved and unobtrusive manner, and usually live amongst the poorest. I once became friendly with a very pious weaver of my village, and he told me of one who was then in Lahore. I went to the spot indicated by my weaver friend. It was just outside the tomb of Data Ganj Bukhsh. Lo! and behold there was the man as described by my friend. He was working as a labourer, hewing wood, and as he wielded his heavy axe a whistling sound came, from his mouth which sounded like ‘Allah hoo’—(He alone is God)—and this was the sign pointed out to me by the weaver. I went and spoke to him. He was the governor among the esoteric order of this part of our country, but the moment he discovered that he was found out he asked for a transfer to another place. He was, through his superhuman vision, able to discover that it was my weaver friend who had let him down telling me of his whereabouts. The weaver held a very subordinate post in this order and he was rightly punished. He was ordered to move from his village or else he would have been deprived of

his dignity and power. The man, who had tasted the delight of possessing spiritual powers, however small, sacrificed the joys of his worldly life, his family and children, and left the village for good. He has never been heard of since. These men are very difficult to discover, Mem Sahib, and even when you do, they seldom talk. But if God wills it and you are lucky enough to have rendered them some service when they were in need of your assistance—and that is how God works—then you are spiritually a made man. They shower their spiritual blessings on you, and you may have spiritual powers also. It is all a question of luck and God, Mem Sahib. He makes you meet one of these saints when he wishes to elevate you spiritually.”

“ You have just mentioned some real and known saints who are buried all over the country. Can you approach them now when they are dead? Can the dead be of any assistance ?”

“ How can the dead be of any help ? The Qoran says that on the day of judgment a mother will not know her son nor a son his father. Everyone will have to be judged in accordance with his own actions. The moment a person dies, time and space mean nothing to his soul. To his soul the time from his death to the day of judgment seems like the twinkling of an

eye and to us it means millions of years. So says the Qoran—God knows best.”

“ Now tell me something about these tombs, Sher Khan.”

“ Thousands of misguided Muslims and even non-Muslims visit the tombs of these saints and pray for the grant of sons and other worldly favours.”

“ Tell me, Sher Khan, how do you differentiate between the worship of stone gods by non-Muslims and the worship by Muslims of stone tombs of their saints ?”

“ But sometimes the prayers of people at these tombs are known to have been heard.”

“ What can the dead do, Sher Khan ? Every thing is in the hands of God, as you have said already. He alone should be prayed to.”

“ But these dead, Mem Sahib, can do a lot of things. For instance, it is well known that the Chishti saint buried at Ajmere has wonderful powers. Akbar, the illiterate but the greatest Moghul Emperor of India, vowed at this tomb that if he were given a son he would walk on foot from his capital at Fatehpur Sikri to Ajmere. Lo ! and behold, he was granted a son, by the grace of God, and the great Emperor fulfilled his promise and walked 200 miles from



his capital to Ajmere. The Emperor himself had a spiritual preceptor whom he requested to pray for the gift of a son, and this preceptor prayed for him and gave him the glad tidings in advance that a son would be born to him two years later, and exactly two years later a son was born. Mem Sahib, it is not all stories. There is a great deal of truth behind this. Doubts only arise in the minds of unbelievers who have no faith in God and his great powers. He can confer these spiritual powers on anybody He likes."

"Do any non-Muslims ever go to the tombs of Muslim saints, Sher Khan?"

"As far as I know, there is only one place, most important of all, where many Hindus, particularly rich ones, go mainly to pray for the grant of sons. That is the tomb at Ajmere of the Chishti saint I have just mentioned and there is a historical claim behind it, Mem Sahib."

"What is that?"

"The Hindu king who lived at Delhi—when the saint was alive—was called Prithvi Raj Chauhan. He was King of Delhi and Ajmere towards the close of the twelfth century A.D. He heard that this saint was exercising a wide

influence over the Princes of Rajputana. The Chauhan king asked the Governor of Ajmere to arrest the saint and to send him to Dehli. When the Governor came to the holy man he was so over-awed by his spiritual grandeur that he went to his master expressing his inability to carry out his orders. The king was furious and he asked one of the Princes of Rajputana—one whom he trusted most—to go and arrest the saint. But when the Prince entered the room of the saint he stood mute on seeing a halo of light and glory round his head. He also went back unsuccessful and reported the matter to the king. Thereafter the king sent his commander-in-chief from Delhi to arrest the saint, and when the commander-in-chief came into the presence of the holy man, instead of arresting him he saluted him and bent down on his knees before him. 'What do you want, my friend?' asked the saint. 'I have orders from the king, but Sir, I have not the courage to tell you what these orders are.' 'Go back and tell your king that he has been delivered, alive, a prisoner into the hands of Mohamed Ghori,' said the saint. This was a strange utterance, because Mohamed Ghori had only the previous year suffered a severe

defeat near Thanesar at the hands of the Hindu princes, who had combined under the command of the Chauhan King of Delhi and Ajmere. Do you know Thanesar, Mem Sahib ? That is the place where all the great battles of Hindustan have been fought throughout our history, and the battle described in the Mahabharata was also fought there. It is in the Karnal District.

“ When the commander-in-chief arrived back in Delhi and told the king what had happened, the king ordered his army to march on Ajmere. He was determined to ride at the head of this army and arrest the saint. Although the Chishti *faqir* had no soldiers or armies to protect him, the king feared that the Rajput princes had such a great faith in him that they would not allow him to be arrested without giving battle. Just as the king's army was ready to march on Ajmere, word arrived that Mohamed Ghori had entered India near Peshawar. This was entirely unexpected. Everyone was astounded. The king decided to leave the Ajmere saint alone. After all, what was he ? Just a *faqir*, and he could be dealt with later on. The foreign invader was to be resisted and defeated first. The king at the head of the

very same army which was to have marched on Ajmere set out towards Peshawar, to meet the Ghori's forces at the place where he had previously defeated him. This time, however, the Ghori king was victorious and Prithvi Raj Chauhan was captured alive while he was trying to escape on the back of an elephant. He was taken before the invading king and thereafter executed. This battle was fought in A.D. 1192, from which date India passed definitely under Muslim domination.

“From that moment up to this, Mem Sahib, not only every Hindu prince in Rajputana, but even the great Hindu merchants of Southern India, revere the Chishti saint, and every year they come in large numbers to pray and make vows at this tomb.

“In the courtyard of the saint Chishti's mausoleum you see several enormous cauldrons called *degs*. They are so large that a man can stand upright in one of them and disappear from sight. The Hindu merchant princes of Bombay and Kathiawar come to this mausoleum and make vows that if they get sons they will fill these *degs* with rice and distribute it to the poor. Hundreds of such people go there every year and give away this rice and the poor have a

good time. I have seen this being done myself when I went there on the occasion of one of these annual fairs. I remember one Hindu merchant throwing over the head of his son thousands of small silver coins for the crowd to pick up. This was supposed to have taken away all the burden of evil from his head. That evil was supposed to have become distributed amongst the poor people who picked up the money. For them it was so diluted that it could do them no harm."

"Can one see these big *degs* anywhere near here?"

"No, Mem Sahib. The only places where they could be used were the houses of the great Moghul Emperors or their princes, and I am sorry to say that none of these people exist to-day. Consequently you cannot expect to see these enormous cooking pots in private houses. There are some villages, such as the washermen, who keep big pots like these for dyeing their clothes, and at weddings they lend them to the farmers to cook food in. Have you heard the story of the Moghul Emperor's daughter and one of these big *degs*, Mem Sahib?"

"No, what is it?"

“ It was like this. A daughter of one of the Moghul Emperors was very, very beautiful, and she was in love with his commander-in-chief, but it was not possible for her lover to see this princess frequently. He used to slip into her part of the palace furtively, but one day it so happened that one of the maid-servants betrayed the princess, and reported to the Emperor that the general was in his daughter's courtyard. It may be that this was only a suspicion of those who wrote history, and that it was a mere coincidence that the Emperor turned up at that critical moment, but the fact is that the Emperor entered the courtyard. The princess and her lover were sitting out in the open. The moment one of the servants of the princess announced that the Emperor was at the door and would be in at any moment, the commander-in-chief had to seek shelter, and the nearest place he could find was a *deg* which was fixed on an open hearth in the courtyard. He jumped into it and a maid-servant put the lid on. Unfortunately the Emperor happened to see this. He asked his daughter what there was in the *deg*. One of the servants replied that some rice had been put in there which was to be cooked later on and given

to the poor. 'Let us light the fire now,' said the Emperor. The princess was staggered by the suggestion, but that was the king's command, and before she could say anything the maid-servants, knowing that the death penalty was a very ordinary thing in the days of the all powerful emperors, immediately started to light the fire under the *deg* and the poor lover was grilled to death. The Emperor knew all the time what was happening inside the pot, but he was a cruel man. He was so exasperated at the commander-in-chief being in the ladies' quarters that he had no pity for him, even though he loved him very dearly. The commander-in-chief had no business to be inside his master's home and we people have no pity for him. The general was buried with full honours and the princess used to go and visit his grave and weep there for hours on end. She was very much in love with him. She was a very cultured lady and she could write and read Persian, and she also composed Persian poetry. On his tombstone she had engraved a Persian couplet which she had composed herself: "Why should the wise do a thing for which they have to repent afterwards?" The princess was making a pun on the word 'wise,' because that was

the name of the general. There it is, Mem Sahib. It is a very sad world sometimes, isn't it ?”

“ Tell me something more about the great deeds of those saints you were mentioning, Sher Khan.”

“ Perhaps you would like to know something about a saint buried in western Punjab.”

“ Yes, I would.”

“ Well, he was a great saint, a great saint he was. He had wonderful powers. Do you know, Mem Sahib, that even when he was a young boy everybody thought he was going to be a great man. You can always spot a pearl even when it is inside its shell. All great men are recognised in their swaddling clothes. He attained to spiritual pre-eminence while a young man, a pre-eminence which was unheard of. God was so good to him that wherever he walked a small cloud moved over him to provide shade and protect him against the burning sun. He was truly a Beloved One of God. One day he felt in himself a certain amount of vanity, and vanity, as you know Mem Sahib, God hates most, for there is nothing in a human being of which he may be proud except what is put there by God, so if there is anyone who is justified in being proud it is God himself and not we poor human



beings. The moment vanity entered the saint's mind he fell from God's favour and the cloud disappeared and he stood exposed to the sun. All his past virtues were washed away and he was told to begin *de novo*. Everything is in God's hands, Mem Sahib. There is no good in man except what God ordains for him. Our virtue is what God creates in us. All praise is for Him. We are only a mere handful of dust. What is there to be proud of? All vanity and pride is for Allah and not for us poor mortals."

"How true, Sher Khan."

"Mem Sahib, this saint had to start at the bottom rung of the ladder again. God obliterates great things in this world as children break down little sand castles. This saint soon made up for it, though, and he won himself back into the favour of God, and later on in life his fame spread far and wide. When he was grey-headed he had followers even in Persia, Afghanistan and Russian Turkistan."

"Tell me something really extraordinary that this man did, Sher Khan."

"The story goes that one day, as he was performing his ablutions near his mosque in the quarter reserved for this purpose, he suddenly had a fit. People noticed that his face went pale;

he lifted his head in the air, his beard sticking out and his teeth biting his lower lip. His eyes were bulging as if he were very frightened, and his whole appearance was awe-inspiring. He suddenly lifted his ablution pot and threw it into the air. Everybody stared at him and what do you think happened? The ablution pot completely disappeared. Everybody saw it go, but it did not fall anywhere. This was one of his most famous miracles. No one dared ask him what he had done and why. He went and said his prayers, and things went on as usual. After four weeks, as he was sitting in his open courtyard on a bedstead, with an enormous cushion behind him, the saint smiled at the sight of a group of four people entering the compound. These were an old man, his wife and two children, a son and a daughter and a donkey laden with bedding and cooking pots. This little group of his devotees moved slowly towards him. They were all bare-footed. As a mark of respect they had walked from their home to the residence of their spiritual preceptor without their shoes. The skin of their feet had become absolutely dry and cracked in many places, with grooves like little rivulets on a hillside. Their feet had been bleeding in

places because of the thorns over which they had to walk when journeying through forests. They lived at Kirman in Persia, and they had walked all the way from there, three hundred miles. I suppose you know, Mem Sahib, that many people, good and faithful Muslims, travel to Mecca, the house of God and Medina, where the Prophet is buried, on bare feet from their homes in distant parts of the world. There is a still larger number who take their shoes off as they approach Medina. We had a case in Sargodha the other day, when the dead body of a man was brought in. He had vowed that if his only son got over his fever he and his son would crawl on all fours to a sacred Hindu shrine. As luck would have it the boy got better and they both started to crawl the five hundred odd miles to the shrine. The boy died about half way and the father died when he was about to reach his destination. His body was recovered by the police and brought into the headquarters for a post mortem examination by the police doctor and for cremation."

"How could anyone believe that a stone god could give a human being life?"

"That is what I always say, Mem Sahib. I take my stand on the solid foundation of faith.

I believe in Allah, the one God who is master of all the universe."

"How are you different from a man who has faith in a stone god, Sher Khan? You have faith in an unseen god and he has faith in a stone god."

"But my God is a different God. A stone god is made of matter which is produced by my God. A stone god is made by man, but mine is a God who is begotten of none and who begets none. How can matter create, for it is itself created by some outside power."

"Human beings can create things and are superior to other material things in this world."

"If you want to know the truth, Mem Sahib, in religious matters it is never wise to think too deeply. The more you think the deeper you sink into the morass of bewilderment. For me, solid faith in an unseen God is sufficient and I don't want to know anything more about this matter."

"Why don't you allow other people to have their faith, even if it be in their stone gods."

"Well, Mem Sahib, I don't like to argue with you in this matter. You are clever and educated and you might shake my belief and

trip me up. God knows best and I believe in Him and that is enough for me."

Dorothy Lincoln not wishing to make her orderly's faith tremulous did not pursue this point.

"You were saying something about a saint, Sher Khan, when I interrupted you."

"Yes. I have lost the thread of my conversion. Where was I?"

"You were saying that a man with his family arrived at the saint's house."

"Yes, Mem Sahib, and they walked right up to where he was seated. They bent low and kissed his hands—except of course the two females. The saint would not touch them, for according to the orthodox Muslim religion no man should touch any woman who is not in close relationship to him, such as his daughter or his wife or mother or sister. Shaking hands with women who are not in this close relationship is not permitted by the strict Muslim injunctions.

"All four sat beside the saint and the old pilgrim slowly untied the knot of a cloth which contained something. Everybody watched with intense interest, for he had not spoken a word. Lo! and behold, out of this piece of cloth he

produced a few pieces of a broken earthen pot. All those who were standing by immediately recognised that this pot had been the handiwork of their own village potter. They all held their breath in amazement and wonder, but they dared not say anything. They were waiting to hear what the old man had to say. He started to recount the tale of his long and weary journey from his home in Persia. He said that on their way they were passing through a forest not far from their home and about sundown they heard the roar of a tiger. The sound seemed to come from all directions, and they decided to stand still, for it was no use moving in any particular way as they might have been going straight into the jaws of the tiger. The roar came nearer and nearer. Suddenly they saw the animal in front of them. He lifted his head and fixed his eyes on them. He had been lolloping along, but now he was all tense, ready to pounce on them. While they were waiting bewildered and mesmerised by the eye and the roar of the tiger, they started to pray hard to the Almighty through the saint, begging the latter to intercede on their behalf and to protect them against the danger in which they were placed. The old man impressed upon

his family that they belonged to the flock of their saint and he was a true and great man ; he was a friend of God and they were going to do nothing to protect themselves. It was the saint's duty to get them protection ; he was the shepherd and they were his sheep. As the tiger approached them something suddenly struck him on the head, stunning him, and when he had recovered from his stupor he looked up and seemed to see something which frightened him ; he put his tail between his legs and ran away. After the tiger had gone, they picked up these broken pieces and brought them along, and there they were.

All those who were standing by, examined these pieces and immediately knew they were bits of the pot which the saint had four weeks earlier thrown into the air. Mem Sahib, God is great."

By this time Mrs. Lincoln was getting tired, and she suggested that they should rest under a certain tree.

"No, Mem Sahib," said Sher Khan, "It is only a mulberry tree and does not give much shade. The farmers round about here have cut away its branches for making yokes. It is a very fine kind of a tree. We can grow

silkworms on its leaves, but the farmers are so ignorant that they do not know how to make full use of their wealth. I know a man who has a small forest of these and he makes quite a bit of money out of silkworms and by selling wood to a manufacturer of hockey sticks and tennis racquets. I am afraid that the second tree that you see further on is no use either because it is throwing its shade on to the road. It is a *sisso*. It gives a cool shade, but I would not advise your stopping there, for the road is very dusty and our men-folk could not sit on powdery dust four inches deep. Moreover, if any people happen to come along this road they will raise such a cloud of dust that we shall all feel suffocated. It would not be right for us to keep the baba exposed to this danger. But the furthest tree that you see is on the north side of the road and is throwing its shade into a fallow field, where we shall be able to sit in peace and rest, particularly because the wind is blowing from the north and if there is any dust raised by travellers along the road it will be blown away from us."

As they walked along Marjorie called for her mother, as she felt her back aching, due to fatigue and continuously lying flat on her back.



But her mother knew that she could not lie on her side, as she had attempted to do so and had not succeeded, for that gave her more pain than ever. Mrs. Lincoln said nice things to her daughter by way of diverting her thoughts from her pain. She continued talking until they reached the coveted tree, under which all officers who passed along that road were wont to rest.

"Sher Khan, there are people already under that tree."

"They will gladly move away to make room for you, Mem Sahib."

"Oh no, I should not like to put them to any inconvenience."

"It is no use going back to the trees we have left behind. Perhaps there is room for us all under that tree. It is a fairly large one. It is an old tree. It has been there since the days of my great-grandfather."

As they approached the cool shade, Mrs. Lincoln noticed that there were a few goats lying quietly under the tree and chewing the cud and throwing suds of foam from their mouths on to the ground. Some of these goats were of the coarser kind, black in colour, with long rough hair, but most of them belonged to the Barbali class, with very fine hair and shiny

coats. They were all liver coloured, and their ears were like those of the deer. These goats were famous for their long fat teats, which almost touched the ground when the beautiful animals walked gracefully through the streets of different towns. They were well known for their milking capacity. Marjorie had often seen such goats late in the afternoons and early in the mornings when they went into town for their milk calls. The goat-herds walked behind them through street after street along a beaten track, and the people who had developed a taste for their milk always came out of their houses with their brass jugs and long tumblers on hearing the cry "Goat-herd is here." People often preferred goat's milk to cow's, not only because it made them active and energetic, but also because it was considered free from tubercular germs. It was light to digest and cheaper than cow's milk. It had a smell of its own, but people soon got used to it. One could always smell people accustomed to drinking goat's milk in the same way as one could spot a goat-herd from a considerable distance due to the unusual smell of his body and clothes. But that did not matter very much, because the milk was cheap and healthy, and goats could

be milked at all hours of the day ; nor were they fussy like the cow about fixed hours of meals. The fact that the milk might contain the forty-day malta fever germs did not outweigh, in the opinion of those who liked it, its manifold advantages over other kinds of milk.

As the party approached the shade of the tree, some of the goats rose from their places at the sight and noise of the horses, but soon realising that the newcomers meant them no harm they lay down again and continued their process of chewing the cud.

Under this tree there were also two men. One was standing, and the other was resting his hams against a mud wall, which was about two and a half feet high and was supported on the outside by thorny branches of acacia trees. It gave to the crops a protection of sorts against stray animals as well as against the purposeful negligence of the neighbouring farmers, who allowed their cattle to roam into the fields to feed at someone else's cost. The goat-herd was resting against this low wall. He had a loin-cloth but wore no shirt. It could be noticed that this loin-cloth was made of two pieces of locally made material, seamed down the middle. When the hems had worn out he had undone

the seam and reversed the material and made the hems into the seam. He could afford no turban, but his hair was thick and black and, with a certain amount of dirt in it, it provided sufficient protection against the sharp rays of the sun. He carried slung over his shoulder a sheet of cloth which served many purposes, not the least of which was the conveyance of newly-born kids who happened to make their appearance in this world while their mothers were foraging in the forests and fields. He had lots of black, heavy hair on his chest and on his back. His beard was pepper and salt and the hairs of his beard and moustache were matted through neglect and looked like barbed-wire entanglements. He was about fifty. The other man was a village *mirasi*, a minstrel. He was accompanied by his twelve year old son who carried a *Tabla*—a drum. He also was fifty-ish. He wore a beard which was clean and shiny with grease. He must have only recently wiped his greasy hands after his morning meal on it, to give it the necessary sheen and nourishment. His beard was well cut and the ends were turned up by constant training. His moustache was twisted in a rakish manner. This man also wore dirty clothes,

but they had seen better days and must have cost a lot of money when new. It was evident that he was wearing the cast-off clothes of village squires. His loin-cloth was of check silk, pink in colour, with a green silk woven border, made on the hand-loom at Khushab. The dye was fast, for it was Indian. The cheap German analine dyes had not yet replaced the permanent and expensive Indian-made dyes. The loin-cloth was torn, as was also his muslin shirt. He was wearing gold slippers such as are made at Rawalpindi. The whole surface of these hand-made shoes was covered with Russian gold string, but some of the yellow basic thread was beginning to show itself on account of wear and tear. The pointed nose of the slippers had been nibbled away either by a rat or a puppy. The heels were pressed down almost flat, making the sole a suitable fan for throwing up handfuls of dust to the back of the *mirasi's* hair.

This village minstrel was on his usual tour of collecting tips from his patrons. He had been visiting the neighbouring village squires, who for generations past, more or less by custom, had been bound to give him and his family tips. He had attended some weddings

during the current season (late spring) and recited, as was usual, the genealogies of the bridegrooms, counting their ancestors by name back to Noah and Adam in order to confirm them in their belief that they were a pure breed. He had received petty cash rewards for his services. During the present expedition he had attended a circumcision celebration ceremony and had received the silk loin-cloth which he was wearing that morning. He had also been given eight wooden corn measures full of wheat and some raw sugar. Miroo, as he was called, had wrapped a cloth round his waist on which was resting the end of his *sarangi*—violin cum cello, the nearest approach to the human voice. He held the bow in his right hand while his left hand moved up and down the strings near the left shoulder. His face turned upwards, his beard sticking out, he had been singing loudly into the sky.

As Mrs. Lincoln and her party came along Miroo had just finished his songs. He had arrived under the tree a little earlier and the goat-herd had given him a drink of water out of his goat-skin bag which he always carried slung over his left shoulder. He also carried, in his right hand, a shepherd's crook, which not

infrequently led him into trouble, for he invariably used it for cutting down the branches and denuding the trees of all the neighbouring farmers in order to provide food for his flock. In return for the cool, or to be more exact tepid, drink provided by the goat-herd, Miroo had tried to entertain him with his songs. He had first sung a Persian couplet. It was customary for all such minstrels to start their entertainment with Persian songs, in order to show off their knowledge of this great language, the language of the best poets of the East. He sang :

“Oh waterfall, who is your lover for whom you are weeping and wailing, that like me the whole night long you have been striking your head against a stone and moaning.”

He had succeeded in memorising only this first line, which evidently was the entire stock of his Persian poetry. He had picked up this line at the wedding of the son of a squire, who had invited Miss Gul Jehan Begum, from Calcutta to entertain his guests at a moderate remuneration of Rs. 1,000 per night, all inclusive. Miroo had heard of her visit and had taken himself there to improve his knowledge of music and song.

Having finished the Persian couplet, Miroo thereafter descended suddenly to Urdu poetry, of which he also knew only one line ;

“Nowadays thy mad lover is caught in a storm of hysteria and ecstasy. To drink he gets the blood of his heart and to eat he gets pieces of his liver.”

Having sung this line about eighteen times and enabled even the goat-herd to memorise it and realise that repetition was taking place, Miroo switched on to a song in Punjabi, his own mother-tongue. He sang the song which begins thus :

“Oh my beloved, come to me over the housetops, for the love of maidens is like poison in my heart.”

The Punjab villagers had folk songs in which the first line was usually meaningless and absurd, and was only written in order to create a rhyme for the second line, which was the real purport of the poem. The Italians were masters of this kind of poetry. It had been a point for research workers to find out the reason for this similarity in the Punjabi and Italian poetry.

When Miroo was singing his Punjabi songs, the goat-herd started to weep bitterly, shaking



his shoulders and sighing deeply. Tears flowed down in torrents. The minstrel, realizing that he had at last discovered in the goat-herd a man who at least understood and appreciated his great art, sang more and more loudly, until not only his stock of Punjabi poems was finished but his voice broke down and became husky. When he stopped singing and the goat-herd had finished wiping his eyes, Miroo thanked his patron for the encouragement shown and enquired as to which part of the songs appealed to him most. The goat-herd replied that the last portion was the one that made him cry. Miroo volunteered the remark that poetry which could be sung with pathos and understanding was only that which was written in one's mother-tongue, and that he had no doubt that the goat-herd had understood every word of what had been said, but he again enquired, what it was that made his solitary audience weep. The goat-herd replied that he had had a favourite billy goat which unfortunately became stricken with colic, and just before he expired he was suffering such acute pangs of pain and was in such dreadful convulsions that his last cries were heartrending, and he had found great

similarity in the voice of the minstrel and the cries of his beloved goat, and it was actually the thought of parting with that goat and not the songs which had caused his crying and brought about his tears. Miroo stood mortified to dust but once more in full possession of his customary humility and balance of mind.

It was at the close of this solo concert and its post-mortem that Mrs. Lincoln and her company arrived under the tree. Both the minstrel and the goat-herd turned to look at the newcomers. Miroo saluted the Mem Sahib, bending very low, in the hope that the *baksheesh* he expected from a woman belonging to the ruling race would be commensurate with the depth of his bow. While Miroo was performing these salutations the goat-herd stood still and just stared.

Marjorie's palanquin was quietly placed on the ground. The mother dismounted as did also the two orderlies who were riding at her side. The eight men who were carrying the palanquin sat down to rest and have a drink, while Mrs. Lincoln bent down to remove the bed sheet which formed the improvised canopy. As Mrs. Lincoln touched it she found that it was extremely warm, and on pushing it aside she

discovered that her child's face was red-hot, her throat was parched with thirst, as was also the entire mucous membrane of her mouth. Her lips were white with thirst and scales had formed on them. The mother's heart stood still. Mrs. Lincoln asked for the thermos flask which contained the orange juice. The boy orderly who had been carrying it on horseback along the side of Sher Khan, rushed up to Mrs. Lincoln. She grabbed the bottle quickly, unscrewed the top and pulled out the cork. To her horror she heard the jingle of broken glass; the jolting of the horse had smashed the inside glass of the half full bottle. She was afraid to give this juice to her daughter, even after straining it through a clean part of Sher Khan's muslin turban. She considered it unsafe in case a minute bit of glass should have escaped and should find its way into the child's intestines and prove fatal. She was in these exasperating circumstances as patient as she was noble and brave. Not an angry word was uttered by her to anyone. Luckily Sher Khan was carrying a canvas bag full of boiled water in case Mrs. Lincoln herself should need a drink on this long march. Out of this bag a few drops were given to Marjorie. Mrs. Lincoln was anxious to get home to the

headquarters as quickly as possible and asked everyone to march off immediately, apologising to the carriers for not letting them have sufficient rest. They all rose with a smile on their faces and the party moved off at their usual pace. They had another five miles to go, so Mrs. Lincoln started talking to Sher Khan again.

"Have you ever seen a dancing Dervish?" she asked.

"I don't know what you mean by a dancing Dervish, Mem Sahib, but I can tell you what I saw in Lahore once."

"Yes."

"I went to pay my respects to an old retired Muslim judge. He is reputed to be a very pious and saintly man. He is still alive. By the way, he has a vagabond son. He is in the Army and is a bit of a lad, and is always getting into trouble over women—not an uncommon complaint against good-looking healthy young men. But his father through his prayer and soul force always saves his son from the consequences of his pranks, and I think he has eventually succeeded with the help of God in bringing his son to the right path."

"What about the Dervishes?"

“ Yes, Mem Sahib. This judge holds a spiritual seance in the evening at his house after sundown prayer every Thursday ; Friday being the Muslim Sunday, Thursday evening is considered holy. When I went there I saw him resting on an enormous cushion and about eight or ten more men were seated in a circle. They gradually began to hum ‘ Allah hoo, Allah hoo.’ I tell you, it had a most wonderful effect on me too. My heart began to flutter and my hair stood on end. They say that if that happens to one it means that the light of God is entering his heart and that thousands of angels are entering his body through his pores to purify his mind. I do not agree with those who consider spiritualism to be a mere subjective phenomenon. As the seance proceeded, someone occasionally burst out, loudly reciting a couplet in praise of God or the Holy Prophet. The others became mute but the moment the couplet was ended they beat the floor with the palms of their hands and started humming ‘ Hoo, hoo ’ again. I can picture to myself now the man who recited the first couplet. It was winter and they were all in a room. I can see. There he throws his shawl down from his shoulders, pushes his right hand up in the

air, his fingers straight and tightly held together his face serious, eyes glistening, his lips pulled back as if he were smiling in admiration of a beautiful thing, his white teeth shining through his black beard and moustache. At the top of his voice he recites a couplet in praise of the beauty of his beloved God. He is pining to see and meet his love. There he pulls his hand down, lifts back the shawl and starts humming 'Hoo, hoo,'. Then another man steps into the breach and recites a couplet in honour of the Holy Prophet.

"It went on like this the whole evening."

"Why do they call them dancing Dervishes?"

"I forgot to tell you that later on when the men were warmed up more and more, one of them, not content with thumping his hand on the ground or on his chest, threw his shawl and turban away, raised himself from the ground put both his hands on his knees, raised his buttocks in the air and hung his head low in between his knees, his hair almost touching the ground, and started humming 'Hoo, hoo.' He did that for half an hour, and towards the end of his seance a whistle began to come out of his voice which he valued very much. It is a wonder how he kept up his strength. Eventually the Judge Sahib put his hand on him

and he was restored to quietude. Another man who was not quite so thinly built as the one just mentioned rose from his seat—thin people are said to be more psychic than others—and stood erect. He was a young man of about 28. He had a beard too. He threw his shawl down and started hopping about inside the circle. He tore his shirt off and a bit of it he held in his hand in front of his eyes and continued to run in a circle. I was told afterwards that when he did that he saw a spark of the light of God at the tip of his finger and the moment he stopped running the light disappeared: thus his aim was always to run continuously and dance about till he was absolutely exhausted."

"Are they dangerous, Sher Khan?"

"No, Mem Sahib. They are ordinary people. They do their work like other people. But they are madly in love with God and the Holy Prophet, and when they are worked up during the course of these seances they do anything in the name of religion. That is the time when they are dangerous. That life is of no value to them if they feel that they are laying it down in obedience to the commands of God or the Prophet. To win themselves into the favour of God is their one object in this life, which they consider but a momentary and passing phase."

They turned the corner suddenly and Mrs. Lincoln said :

" Here we are, Sher Khan. We have arrived at the house. Oh, Marjorie, there is your dog Benjie. Look, he is jumping and swirling round in the air to greet his mistress. He has missed you all these days. He is barking and nearly laughing with joy."

Marjorie lifted her head as her mother pushed back the curtain of the litter with her riding crop. Marjorie looked at Benjie and gave a sweet smile, which was all that her mother was interested in. Anything to make her daughter happy was her main ambition at the moment. There were all the women-folk of the servants collected near the corner of the verandah of the house. These women had already heard that the baba was ill and that she was likely to arrive that afternoon. As the litter passed by they were all muttering : " May God give you health, Marjorie baba. May you never be exposed to hot winds. May calamity never come near you. May not only your friends and all those who are near to you, but even your enemies, remain safe from calamity. May we see you running about again in this house. May you live for ever in these Seven Kingdoms of this earth."



The litter was placed on the ground and Marjorie lifted out by Sher Khan and placed on her bed in the room on the north side of the house in front of which there was a wide verandah. Her mother had sent word in advance about all preliminary arrangements. She wanted Marjorie to convalesce in the verandah. She was very much hoping that in a few days she would be walking about and playing. She knew that her daughter would love to play on the floor, where she had played for so many years in the past, where she used to sit and do her puzzles and play with her dolls, where she had looked at her picture books and run after Benjie and tried to catch him and admonish him for being naughty. Mrs. Lincoln could recall when Marjorie used to catch hold of the collar of her little Benjie and slap him and say to him : “ Do as your mistress tells you. Beg for this biscuit.”

Dorothy was very much hoping and praying that God should restore her daughter's health. She was quite sure that she had only to send for the doctor and her daughter would recover quickly. She was of the opinion that all her trouble was due to her being without proper attention and competent medical advice. She

knew that Marjorie was a good girl and always took her medicine, and consequently her recovery would be all the quicker.

Sher Khan had already asked the Sahib's watchman to run for the doctor, who lived only a few houses away. Meanwhile Mrs. Lincoln took her temperature. It was 103. Marjorie owing to the journey seemed to have withered away like a fresh rose under the heat of the scorching sun. Immediately she was in bed her mother offered her a little fruit and after the girl had finished it she said: "Now, you will soon be well and strong again if you go on drinking this orange juice. Lie down and rest."

"Thank you, Mummy."

On receiving word from Sher Khan, the doctor arrived immediately. The inevitable stethoscope was hanging round his neck. He sat by Marjorie's bed, and after seeing the temperature chart, which Dorothy had religiously kept, he pulled up Marjorie's shirt in order to examine her. He first put the stethoscope to his ears and on her back, and not being satisfied with this he put his left hand on her back and with the tip of the middle finger of the other hand he gave it a few hammer-like thumps. The sound of the lungs was good.

The doctor came morning and evening. He used to sit by the bedside and look at the temperature chart, but he always left the place with a very contemplative expression on his face. His final instructions always were: "Her strength must be kept up." Dorothy could have given this medical opinion herself. The real fact of the matter was that the doctor was unable to find out what the child was suffering from. The temperature was now constantly at 102 or 103 degrees, and she lay flat on her back, her eyes staring at the ceiling. She could not talk, but kept turning her head from side to side. She was in great pain, but she could not help herself by moving. The doctor even then could not find out what the trouble was. He was only the Assistant Surgeon.

Dorothy had kept Mr. Lincoln informed of their daughter's illness but always minimised the trouble. She felt that Jim could do no more than she was doing herself and there seemed no point in disturbing him in his work. She herself suffered excruciating mental agonies and telegraphed to the doctor in the adjoining District of Jhang. He had been educated in England. But before he actually arrived at Sargodha the child was no more. After a

talk with the doctor in charge of the case he immediately came to the conclusion that Marjorie had died of cerebrospinal meningitis. If she had been treated early and the liquid drawn out of her spine she might have been saved. She must have picked up the disease from some village children, for it was an airborne disease. There were often a large number of children standing round about the horses when Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln mounted and Marjorie often stood nearby before her parents went out. It might have been there that she caught the fell disease, or it may have been when a group of village boys and girls were standing under the shade of an adjoining tree and were teasing a boy of eight, who joined them most heartily in their laughter. Marjorie had enquired the cause of their mirth and Sher Khan had led her to the place where they were all standing and told her that the young boy at the request of one of the others was trying to say quickly : " Along the hard open ground ran two jackals, the front one was my son and of the other I was the father," and the boy every time said : " I was the son of the front one and the second was my father."

It was no use trying to investigate how Marjorie caught the fever. It was no use the doctor telling Mrs. Lincoln his ideas of the manner in which the germs had been picked up. It was, alas, too late to do anything.

After Marjorie's death Mrs. Lincoln had beentosee her daughter's grave every few hours. Sher Khan could not prevent her from going there. Marjorie died on Saturday. The fair was on Sunday, and Mr. Lincoln did not know of the calamity till he reached Bhalwal railway station on Monday morning. While he was in the train Mrs. Lincoln was in the cemetery kneeling at her child's grave and praying :

“ Oh God, why do I come to pray here ? Is it of any use to my child or is it a solace to my own nerve-wracked system ? Is everything from within, of my own creation, unaffected by and unaffecteding the outside world ? Yes, I come to see the spot where the heart of my heart, where my limb, where a part of my body, lies buried in cold uncomfortable dust, gradually turning into dust, transforming quickly so that I shall not be able to say whether it is of me or of that from which we all were created. Is my daughter feeling any pain or suffocation from the pressure of earth ?

Oh earth, please lie gently over my child, be merciful. Perhaps my daughter feels nothing. Perhaps my daughter is not there. Her remains are possibly only the house in which she lived and what is a house, without an inmate ? My daughter is already in peace. I know she was so pure. She had committed no sin in this world. Oh, please God, do not punish her for the sins of her parents. She was never responsible for what we did. She was only eight, incapable of sinning. She was as white in heart and mind as your own light. I can't believe in the original sin of man. It is so unreasonable ; it is so unfair to punish people for what they have not done.

“ I am not complaining about my daughter. If I am straying from the right path, for the sake of Him who was dear to you put me straight again.

“ When I have a feeling that my child is happy why do I weep ? I am told that each tear drop of mine is an obstacle in the path of my departed child. But the tears cleanse my heart of all its grief, grief which lingers on and bites. This water will wash my heart clean, and make it as white as a mirror. But I hope it will not make it as brittle, for it might break under the

blow struck by the merciless death. Please God, give me the mind to realise that your laws are inexorable and all travel the same way. Those who are born must die. Perhaps to die early is to die better.

“My weeping will not bring my child back. I must think of Jim. What will Jim do if I die? If I sink, I shall be in peace. The suffering is only for those who are left behind. I must not be a coward. I must pull myself together. Nothing will bring my daughter back.”

As Mrs. Lincoln pulled herself up, she wiped the dust from her knees with her hands, but then she stopped, placed her hands on her face and her thoughts ran back to her child again.

“Shall I ever see you again, my child? What use will our meeting be in the hereafter if I do not know you and you do not recognise your mother? For you the time will flit by like the twinkling of an eye. For me, a day of my life will drag on like a year. I shall not come to this dust again. What use is my coming? I can think of you while I sit or lie in my house. I can often feel you. I saw you only this morning, early, about four hours before sunrise. You were shouting: “Mummy, Mummy,” I could have sworn I heard you alive. I opened my

eyes. My heart was throbbing with joy. But you were not there. I closed my eyes again in the vain hope that I might see you, hear your voice and feel you in my arms and kiss you. Come to me again, even though only in dreams, won't you, Marjorie?"

Mrs. Lincoln let her hands fall and reasoned with herself, tried to make herself believe that everything that had occurred in her dream was of her own imagination. The dead never came back. The laws of nature could not be changed with prayer. Every child, whether white or black, who played with children suffering from meningitis was likely to catch it and perhaps die if not properly treated. Her daughter's death was not an accident. It was the result of circumstances which, if repeated in exactly the same manner, were likely to bring about the same result. As she walked home she had another fit of grief and stood on the roadside resting her shoulder on a tree.

"Oh God, why did you do it? Are you really all mercy, as we are told you are? If so, why do you do things such as this, and break the hearts of poor creatures like me. I know people must die. But why can't you let them all live till they are old and till they have enjoyed the



fruits of life and this world, which you say you created for us ?

“ Oh, how silly of me. How can I, poor mortal, understand the ways of God ? ”

At this moment she recalled to her mind the story of Alexander the Great, who in his quest for life-giving water was roaming through the Caucasus mountains, when he suddenly came to the spring out of which he had been told by sages flowed the water which gave everlasting life. He filled his cup and was about to drink it when he saw a parrot lying on the ground by the side of the water and fluttering its featherless wings. The bird begged Alexander to kill it, for it had by mistake drunk the water of that spring and was unable to die. Its life had become one interminable misery. Alexander threw away the cup of water which he held in his hand.

Mrs. Lincoln gave a push to the tree with her shoulder and continued her struggle home.

“ Can one get anything in this world by begging for it ? ” She argued with herself. “ No. Even death does not come to you when you want it. Everything that you want is difficult of achievement. I must pull myself together. The secrets of life and its whys and

wherefores are still unsolved. I remember what my Hindustani teacher told me some years ago. 'There are thousands of pundits and thousands of wise persons in extreme and constant bewilderment, but oh my friend, after all investigations, when I saw at last, all that I saw was that God alone knows the whys and wherefores of what happens in this world.' I must go back to my house. I must drag myself away. Oh God, why did you call me to the East? Is this the reward that you had in store for me, for my response to your call, or is this a trial into which you have thrown me? Could you not have tried me in some other way? When you know that human beings are weak, what is the use of putting us on trial? In my case, a trial is useless, for you know that my faith in you is unshakable. I have done everything in my power to serve you through your poor people, and look what I get. What pleasure have you derived from destroying all my joy? Is it true that you punish some people in the next world for the sins which they have committed in this? Is it also true that there are others whom you punish in this world for their sins, instead of doing so in the next? Am I one of those who have been punished in this world because you

wish to save me from the dire punishments which are in store for us in the world hereafter? Is the punishment in this world lighter than the punishment which you inflict in the next? Shall we consider what we suffer here as your mercy? Are the snakes and the fire and the filth of the next world any different from what they are in this world? Is it all our imagination that, in order to console ourselves and in order to help us to bear our suffering in this world with patience, we make for ourselves an easy and happy conscience which enables us to believe that the reward for what we suffer here is going to be all peace and happiness in the hereafter? But is there a hereafter? Are you not capable of making us happy in this world as well as in the next? What have I done for which you have punished me, and if you are punishing me, why punish my child and take her away just when she was on the threshold of life in this beautiful world? Or is it that you have not punished her and that she does not feel any pain in her transfer from this to your own world of spirit? Is my child happier with you than she was here? What is the secret of all this? At least tell us this much, for we should be happier than we are at present if we

knew the secret of it all. Why can't we see you, satisfy our thirst for knowledge, and let us base our belief and action on something solid, tangible, on something that we can see, on something that we know? Why do you call upon us to have blind faith? Why don't you talk to us, to put our mind at peace and to solace us? You could choose your own favourites if you liked. You could decide to speak to only those who had committed no sin, and thus there would be something to work for in this world. Perhaps we have all committed sins and we are unworthy of seeing you, but there can be exceptions to all rules and there is no limit to human effort and to the spiritual heights to which we can rise or to the depths of degradation to which we can fall. We are told we are better than angels. Am I just trying to puzzle myself more and more by thinking deeply into problems which no one has ever solved, or is it my grief which has blinded me and I cannot see reason, or is it that I am striking my head against a stone wall of disbelief, or is it that Satan, in discharge of his duty, is trying to lead me away from the right path? Please show me your own way, the way to yourself, and give me the

wisdom to follow that way, the path of those on whom you have showered your spiritual blessings and not of those who have gone astray.

"I must finish this. Bless you, my child, and God be with you. Rest in peace, I must hurry back to my house. Jim may be back any moment. He is expected home this morning."

Lincoln happened to arrive at his house just in time to see his wife stagger in from the graveyard. He at once realised what had happened. He knew that the funeral could not wait for him, since in hot climates it was essential that the dead should be buried without delay. It was no use his talking to his wife. He knew her feelings and she knew without his saying so that he wanted her to bear the shock bravely and be careful about her own health. They sat together in the same room the whole day long without saying a word to each other or eating a thing. In the evening he persuaded her to have a little tea and they retired early.

During the night Lincoln had a dream. He saw his daughter. Someone was holding her by the hand. He was handsome and young, wore a beautiful brown beard. Marjorie was smiling and her eyes were fixed on her father. Lincoln could not lift his gaze from his

departed child. He wanted to take her from the friendly man without the least delay. He did not speak a word nor did Marjorie, but their eyes had a language of their own. He wanted to meet her and she was almost inviting him to come to her. As Lincoln advanced to meet her he suddenly discovered that an abyss, deep, dark and wide, separated him from his child. He was excited. He could not jump across. There was no bridge. He ran about like a sheep separated from her lamb. He shouted to his daughter :

"How did you get across ? How can I come to you ?"

"The same way as I came, Daddy."

He looked around in a most pathetic and helpless manner. He looked at the handsome man as if to appeal for help. The good man nodded his head and lifted up his arm. Lo, it stretched right across the abyss, forming a bridge and inviting Lincoln to step on to it and walk over to his daughter. As he was about to do so he heard him say :

"Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

The moment he cast his eyes again on the outstretched arm, he found it had disappeared.

The thought of his failure to meet his daughter excited him so much that he woke up. He tried to go to sleep but could not. He did not tell his wife of this dream, but he pondered over it all day long. He wondered where Marjorie had gone, and why. Who took her away? Who was with her? What was it that was expected of him? He could not make up his mind whether his dream was the direct result of his own hallucinations or a sign from God indicating to him what he was to do. Anyway it was no use worrying any more for the time being. He thought that perhaps his dream meant that he had in the past been spiritually diseased and that the dream was a divine revelation giving him the glad tidings that henceforth his spirit and soul stood purified.

By the following morning train Sharfan, Daulat Bibi and her mother arrived in Sargodha. They had heard of Marjorie baba's death and in accordance with the Indian custom they felt they must pay a condolence visit. If it had been an Indian home they were visiting they would have expected to be fed, but knowing that the white people's customs were different from their own, after a short discussion on the

Sargodha station platform they went to the town first and had their morning meal. During the discussion at the railway platform Sharfan had raised her hand to the top of her head and scratched it, as she did when Mrs. Lincoln visited her at Jamalpur. It was a habit of hers. She could not help it, just as some clerks in Government offices could not stop cracking their knuckles.

After their meal in town they walked the mile and a half to Mr. Lincoln's bungalow. They were at first afraid that Mrs. Lincoln might not recognise them. They had been told by their men folk that the ways of great people were queer. While they were very amiable to one when they were out by themselves in the villages or shooting in the jungle, when they got back to town they could hardly remember a face. There could never be true friendship between the humble and the great. Yet these good souls did not wish to be considered heartless by forgetting—when she was in grief—the woman who had often been so kind to them and visited their homes. They entered the Lincoln's bungalow compound from the back, for they were afraid that the servants might not let them come in if they approached the



house from the front drive. They dared not ask for Mrs. Lincoln first, for that would have been presumptuous, and the servants might think that they were related to some litigants or criminal under trial, and push them away. So they asked for Sher Khan. He was sure to recognise them, and so he did. He reported the arrival of the three visitors to Mrs. Lincoln, who said: "Bring them in." She was really pleased to think that these village folk, who could hardly afford the railway fare, had come to condole with her. The three women sat on the floor and said: "Innalilla hi wa Inna ilaihi rajioon." "From Him we come and to Him we return." Their tears flowed down their cheeks, they sat quietly without uttering another word. They sighed a few times and looked at Mrs. Lincoln for quite a while. Sher Khan appeared in the doorway. The three women took their leave, put the right hand on their foreheads and said: "Salaam, Mem Sahib, may God grant you patience."

Sher Khan was very angry with them for having gone to the shops for their meal.

"You have blackened my face," he said, "by eating food with your own money, and here I am, having enjoyed hospitality in your

village for so many years. How shall I be able to show my face in your village again ? Please don't do this any more."

"Thank you, Uncle Sher Khan." (He was called Uncle throughout the District.) "We shall not forget if we ever come this way again."

As they were walking back to the railway station they met Ali, who was delighted to see women who belonged to his village. He immediately put himself in charge of them, for in accordance with custom he was henceforth their guardian and protector till they reached their homes in safety. Being the son of the headman he felt it was his privilege to pay for the tickets of the women under his temporary guardianship. The fare was only sixpence each. As he went to the booking window he was horrified to realise that he was fourpence short. He told his lady friends to wait on a bench and he ran to Sher Khan to borrow money. Sher Khan was delighted to see him, and without asking any question he gave Ali a rupee.

Sharfan and her companions had arrived at the platform about three hours before the train was due. They had no watches and always spoke of trains arriving at times which

were measured and described by the changing position of the sun in the sky. While Ali was away these simple souls were much afraid of losing the train. The few minutes that he was absent seemed aeons to them but their faces soon brightened up when Ali gave them their railway tickets to Bhalwal.

## CHAPTER VII

Lincoln's life had taken a sad turn, but in spite of his worries he continued to discharge his duties as Settlement Officer. Even though his wife, almost demented with grief, was a source of great anxiety and distraction to him, he wrote his settlement report and submitted it to the authorities at Lahore for their approval. The Punjab Government took six months to pass their orders. Meanwhile Lincoln had been appointed Deputy Commissioner of his District. He was able to hold this responsible office in addition to his ordinary duty because the settlement work had greatly decreased. In the due course he went down to the village of Jamalpur again and announced the new tax to the great relief of the peasants for the Punjab Government had accepted his recommendation that the village revenue assessment should stand as it was during the previous forty years. After another two years' stay at Sargodha, he was promoted Commissioner of Rawalpindi, an administrative circle which had the advantage

of the Murree hills where he could recess during the summer. The Governor of the Punjab had given him charge of Rawalpindi in consideration of many claims and facts, not the least of which was Mrs. Lincoln's failing health. He was there for three years when his wife's health broke down completely. He was given a year's leave and took her to England. She improved quickly, very largely on account of the solace she derived from her mother's company. Meanwhile Lincoln had been promoted Financial Commissioner at Lahore. On the assurance of his mother-in-law and at the request of his wife, he went back to the Punjab to complete the service requisite for entitling him to a full pension. The moment he completed his thirty-one year's service and reached the age of fifty-five he sent in his request to be allowed to retire. Meanwhile he had received alarming letters from his mother-in-law about the failing health of his wife, and he decided to hurry home, taking the earliest possible Punjab Frontier Mail to Bombay. He gave parting gifts of money to all his servants, the lion's share going to Sher Khan, who accompanied him to Bombay.

As he arrived at the Lahore station to catch his train, he was staggered to see someone

being carried on a bedstead. It was 10 p.m. "These are Bucknall's servants," he said to himself. "I wonder what trick he is up to this time." He asked Sher Khan to make the necessary enquiry and report to him why the Sahib was being carried thus. He was genuinely sorry to learn that old Bucky was actually dead. In spite of all his faults, everyone liked him. His death was going to leave a gap which was almost impossible to fill. Sher Khan said that Bucknall had gone to the Chail Hills near Kalka to shoot big game. Coming of a martial family, his atavistic tendencies of shooting and killing took a stronger and stronger hold of him as years went by. Not being satisfied with duck, partridge, snipe and jungle fowl, he had applied for and been granted special permission to shoot big game near Kalka. He had on one of his former expeditions shot a panther and broken one of its legs. He followed up the wounded animal, which tried to spring on him by rising on its hind legs, but as Bucknall hit it with his gun it fell on its side. Ever since he had been known as the Sahib who wrestled with panthers. This time, however, he had been less fortunate, for, in spite of his guide's advice to the contrary, he

followed up a wounded panther and got mauled. He had died of blood poisoning before he reached Lahore.

After reaching Bombay, Lincoln slept a night at the Taj Mahal Hotel, had a hurried luncheon on land, and went to his boat. Having put his luggage in his cabin and straightened most of the routine affairs, he went on the promenade deck to stretch his legs and to wave good-bye to Sher Khan, who had been standing on the quay for nearly two hours. Sher Khan could not leave the place till his master's ship had moved away. Having walked a few times round the deck, Lincoln rested his elbows on the railing and began to revolve things in his mind.

"Here I am," said he to himself, "on the way home on board a P. & O. steamer. Let me have a last look at Bombay."

He left the spot from where he could see Sher Khan and the throng of people on the quayside, and went to gaze on the beautiful hills and buildings interspersed in dark green trees which formed the background of the town. But his mind did not travel with his eyes. It was restless, and although he appeared to be admiring the scenery, he was actually pondering over his own circumstances.

“ I wonder,” he thought, “ if it is my last glance at India ? Shall I ever see this country again ? These scenes are very familiar, I have spent all my life here. Am I going to a strange country now, a country that I have not lived in for thirty years ? No, I am going home, to my beautiful home, lovely England, glorious England, tranquil and green with its unmatched mountains and clear-water lakes, a unique countryside, one of the most beautiful pictures which Nature has painted in order to decorate this earth. Yes, I shall see modern English towns ; I shall see all the ships which fill British harbours and which are responsible for the glory of England and her epic past. Our future depends on these beautiful ships. No people can ever rule even themselves unless they know how to sail on the seas. Sea voyage open up man’s mind and his heart, as well as his vision, and enable him to think big in business as well as in world affairs. People who swim in rivers or boat in rivers can only think of small things, but it is the people who travel by sea who can rule the world. Yes, I am going back to England, an England who is mistress of an empire on which the sun never sets.



No monarch in the whole history of the world has ever enjoyed dominion over such vast territories as my King. Yes, my England, mistress of the seas, unbeaten, my home and the best place in the world. We have traditions of freedom and of liberty; of these we are justly proud. I would not change my country for anything imaginable. I am going back amongst the people who live up to these traditions. I shall be in England, where freedom of person, speech and press is unchallenged; England, the refuge of all political outcasts of the world.

“My England, what have you in store for me, your son, who has devoted all his life to your service? The best years of my life are already spent in upholding the British flag and British prestige in the East. I have led such a blameless life that no one can say that a son of England behaved in a manner which was not worthy of her dignity. I have lived in the East, the East that has meant and means so much for your wealth and prosperity. Yes, your merchant princes have made their millions out of the East, my countrymen have retired at comparatively early ages, round about 34 or so, and retired with very comfortable incomes, some

of them with as much as £50,000 a year. They did not work quite so much as I did; they were not quite so honest, nor scrupulous, nor industrious, as I was. They were not liked by the people as much as I was. Here I am. I am retiring with a pension of only £1,000 a year, but it is enough for me, my wants are limited. I do not grumble. I am contented. I am sure they hadn't such an easy conscience as I have.

“I have lived a regular life and preserved my energies. I can still enjoy my time in England on £1,000 a year. I have not £50,000 a year, but my record is clean. I have injured no one, I have robbed no one, I have never taken a penny that I have not earned with the sweat of my brow. I do not owe a farthing to a man in the East. I have not run away with heavy debts due to merchants who have no redress against me. Yes, England, what can I expect of you for all my services and for my sacrifices? I have lost my only child. The health of my wife is broken. When I reach home, shall I, be shunned by your children, because I am an Anglo-Indian? My skin has become brown shall I appear foreign to my people? Will my behaviour seem exotic to them? Will

your sons find nothing in common with me ? Have I lost everything that was British in me ? Will your people think that by having lived in the East and ruled over people, I have acquired an overbearing way of talk which it will not be easy for me to shed ? Will my quiet behaviour make them believe that I look down upon them, that I do not wish to talk to them ? But this is a mere habit which I have acquired in the East, where I had not many people to talk with. Will your people in order to bring me to my senses, ignore me, not shake hands with me, not talk to me ? Will they suspect that I have brought millions worth of ill-gotten gains from the East ? Will I look strange to them ? Will they imagine that I have lived debauched life in hot climates, and that I am no longer a human being but a beast ? Have I really become un-British by constantly living amongst people who looked up to me as their overlord ? Have I lost respect for democracy, for freedom, for equality ? Will it be difficult for me to mingle with the common herd of England again ? No, they are my people ; they will welcome me ; they will love me for what I have done for them in serving as a pillar of Pax Brittanica in the East and for making

their trade safe and lucrative. But how will they know what I have done ?”

“Never mind, James,” he said to himself, “virtue is its own reward. I can devote the rest of my life to comforting my wife, who needs my company, who is weak, broken down and demented. May be when I get back she will be in a mental home. I hope not. There is no reason for her to break down like that. She has never had any financial or domestic worries. We have been very devoted to each other. She should have no fears of the future. Even if I died to-morrow she would have a widow’s pension of £400 a year, for which I have contributed all through my service. Why should she worry ? Why should I worry ? Even if she is not well and I cannot live with her, there is the Amalgamated Cronies’ Club just outside London ; when I am lonely I can go there. I shall meet a lot of friends who have been in the East and who think like me. But do I wish to see again the faces that I have seen all through my life in clubs in sweltering heat in Asiatic countries ? That may mean my mixing with people who have acquired perhaps the evil habits of the East like myself and lost all true virtues of real

Englishmen by disuse. In spite of everything I want to get back to my own people, the vast majority of whom have not been in the East but are real and true Englishmen. But do I really wish to end my days in a dingy old dungeon of a club, full of the foul smoke of Burma cheroots and pipe stink emanating from the pockets of every man who moves about in the building.

“No, I do not want to see these fellows. I am sick of their sight. They will remind me of the East, the East that I want to forget. They will stink of the East. Never mind, I may be able to live in the country, and make new friends, openminded, frank, generous, hospitable people, never wanting anything of another man, independent in their views, people who from their very childhood know how to stand on their own legs and never beg for a favour, people who are the backbone of the country and without whom England would not be England. Will it be difficult for me at this time of my life to make new friends? I have no friends in England, and unfortunately I have left none in India—or have I at least Sher Khan? I knew a few English fellows in the clubs in the places where I served; some were civil servants

others were policemen, yet others were subalterns and moustached old colonels whom I stood a lot of *chota pegs* and *bara pegs*. But perhaps I shall not see them in London. They probably are scattered to all the four corners of the world. They do not like to come back to a cold country. They must have all gone into lands which give them opportunities for starting new careers. They may have settled in New Zealand, in Australia or in South Africa. I shall never see them again. It is a big world. They will not come back. Yes, I have left no friends amongst the Indian gentry. I have played a little king. I have done favours to hundreds of them. They will salute me if I go back again. But is there a single Indian whom I can call a friend and who will write to me while I am in England and who will remember me and want to see me again? Perhaps my cook will send me a letter at Christmas time for a year or two, in the hope that I may recommend him to friends in India for further employment, and sign himself 'Your ever faithful and grateful yet forgotten servant.' No, I have left no friends in India.

"Is it true that I have friends neither in India nor in England ? Oh, what a life ! It is too late to start anew in England. May be God has something in store for me. Why worry now ? Let me get to England first, and perhaps all my troubles will be over and my future safe and happy. Let me see how England treats me."

The ship's siren hooted and James Lincoln ran back to wave good-bye to his trusted servant.

Sher Khan had remained stationary at the spot where Mr. Lincoln saw him last, but as he came back on the quay side of the deck he noticed that Sher Khan was saluting him good-bye. Tears flowed down his cheeks and hung onto the ends of his red beard like pearls. He was not crying because his master was leaving, nor because he had lost his job. His thoughts had gone back to his own home, where on his return he would be surrounded by his children, who would try to dig out sweets from his pockets. How he would kiss them and fondle them. He was looking forward to the joys of his home. Suddenly his thoughts had turned towards the future home of his master, and when he thought of Marjorie baba and the way she had suffered and departed he could not help crying over the

thought that his master was going to a home where there was no child. When he visualised the caresses and talks of his own children which were in store for himself, a prayer of thanksgiving to Almighty God arose in his heart. How much happier he was than his master in spite of the latter's Rs. 1500 a month and his own Rs. 20. He would not have exchanged his own humble position for that of his master, no matter what the monetary temptation. He prayed to God to bless his master with children, particularly sons. If God could grant a son to Abraham at the age of 90 when he had no hopes of issue at all, there was every hope for Mr. Lincoln, who was only fifty-five.

He kept his right hand at salute while the ship was gliding away and did not move till Mr. Lincoln had turned round and disappeared into the saloon.



## CHAPTER VIII

On his arrival in England Lincoln went straight to the house of his mother-in-law, where Dorothy was staying. He alighted from the taxi, took his luggage out and paid the driver. He quickly ran up the few steps there were to ring the front door bell. His heart was palpitating with the excitement of seeing his wife. His ears were strained to catch every possible sound of footsteps within the house. There was no sound. He rang again. There was no sign of any life in the house. A neighbour opened her front door and said to him : " I am sorry to tell you that the lady who lived in that house died suddenly five days ago." Lincoln's heart stood still. He dared not ask more questions for fear he might hear the worst about his wife. But the neighbour spoke again : " The old lady's daughter has been sent to a mental home."

" Can you please tell me where ?"

" I can't, but the doctor who lives ten houses down the road will."

Mr. Lincoln hurried down to the doctor's house and found out where his wife was. It was too late to see Dorothy that day, so he decided to go to a hotel for the night.

Next morning he was at the asylum at the earliest hour at which visitors were allowed to see the patients. This mental home was in an old mansion with large grounds at the back. The front gate, facing east, was in the centre of a double-storied tile-roofed building where lived the Lady Superintendent and a dozen Saint Francis nuns. As Lincoln approached he noticed a lawn in front of him. On the right there was a block of rooms, and also one facing him. This building had a verandah on the south side. The Superintendent led Lincoln towards the verandah, but before they could reach it they were surrounded by the inmates, who all gathered round the stranger. They did not attack him but came very close to him, asking for presents. The Superintendent had, as usual, several cigarettes and chocolates in her pocket, and she gave each patient one thing or the other and they all went away. There was one woman standing under a tree on the left and talking at the top of her voice with some imaginary person up in the branches. Another

one walked in front of the Superintendent and continuously danced. She was said to be the wife of an usher. Another one constantly pressed the Superintendent to let her know when the gold brocade clothes belonging to her and stolen by a certain princess would arrive. There were one or two dangerous lunatics shut up in the second storey of a separate block of buildings on the left, which also housed a few patients suffering from infectious diseases such as tuberculosis.

As Lincoln approached the building he sensed that his wife must be in one of the rooms which opened out onto the verandah. The Superintendent led him into the last room. He was holding his breath and praying all the time that he might see his wife looking well. As he entered the room, Dorothy was gazing out of the window which opened on the west. The entry of the visitors did not make her move. The Superintendent touched her on the shoulder and she turned round. She looked pale, her hair had gone completely grey and she had a vacant look in her eyes. She took no notice of James who stood there stunned with grief, his tears flowing down his cheeks. The Superintendent did her best to make her talk, but

without success, for Dorothy's mind was completely gone.

She answered none of his questions even though she was not deaf. Lincoln continued to visit her regularly every day till one severe cold winter night she neglected to cover herself properly, caught pneumonia and died within a week. Lincoln had very little interest left in London, and decided to take a trip into the Lake District and Scotland. This done he returned to London.

One day he dropped into the famous club which was the last sanctuary of all those who had retired from the East and whose culminating ambition was usually to fossilise in the leather-covered chairs and sofas of this well-known pub in the west. It was here that they could with impunity drink to their heart's content, even port and claret, which some of them dared not order in their clubs in the East for occasionally it had been called a prostitute's drink. This place in the outskirts of London was a miniature East, as oriental as the Chinese dens in the East End, and as exclusive of their own people as the white men's clubs in the East were of the people amongst whom they lived. Lifelong service among a subject

people had given all the members of this club great faith in the theory that some were born to govern and some were born to slave and work. Some of these retired cronies had picked up these ideas at Oxford or Cambridge when they were young, and others had picked up this philosophy by experience among the people who were their equals in nothing. These gentlemen formed a class by themselves. They did not mix with the English people, for they considered the common herd in England incapable of governing themselves and as much in need of their efficient services as the teeming uneducated millions of the East. If they could they would have liked to deprive the Englishman of his vote and provide him with efficient administrative machinery such as they had the privilege of evolving in the East. The British people, on the other hand, considered these tanned gentry to have lost their sense of freedom democracy and equality of man. They found their behaviour as strange as that of a rustic in the presence of urbane citizens. Between the British public as a whole and these retired dignitaries of the East there was a natural inhibition against association with each other. The chosen ones

of God being fewer in number as compared with the general population they were forced to resign themselves to their fate and confine their activities and their tall talk to this particular club. Lincoln, through no fault of his own, was driven into the unwholesome life and un-British atmosphere of this dingy old building about two miles south of Kew gardens.

The first day he went into the club, he picked up a back number of *Punch* and was glancing through it when his attention was suddenly attracted by something red, appearing over the back of a chair. It looked like a football bladder blown up. When he had scrutinised it more carefully he had no doubt that it was the head of someone reclining in an easy chair. At the top of this head he noticed a mark and said to himself: "I wonder if it is he." He recalled to his mind a certain young lieutenant who was posted to Ambala in a mule corps many years ago and had a mark like that. He was a Lieutenant Knickerbocker. On his first posting he was given a Pathan orderly. This Pathan came from the back of beyond hills in the tribal territory of the North-west Frontier. The stalwart denizens of the barren rocky country had never been subdued, either by the Afghan

Government or by the British, and they made such fearless warriors that throughout the ages all rulers of India had been glad to recruit them in their armies. So were the British. Having just arrived from England, Mr. Knickerbocker could not stand the torments of flies, which, in spite of the *chicks* hung over his office door, invaded the young officer's official domain in large numbers. He had commanded his orderly Jang Khan to kill all the flies before office hours, and he having completely failed to come up to the British standards of efficiency, which had made the British factories as efficient as they were, was ordered by way of a punishment to stand by the Sahib while he worked and kill every fly he saw in the room. Jang Khan was well known for his daring in obeying the commands of his superiors and he was brave enough—when commanded to do so—to have walked into the mouth of a lion. Young Knicky did not wish to be talked to. He was very hot tempered, and over the question of flies he had often shown his anger to Jang Khan. He had already rebuked him severely. When the latter enquired whether or not he could kill the fly which sat on the file that the Sahib was reading, he had been told in a firm tone

and in unmistakable terms : “ I have told you before to kill *every* fly that you see in this room, no matter where you see it ; do you understand ? ” The orderly while standing behind his master suddenly noticed a fly on his head—made all the more conspicuous by the absence of hair. With a determination to observe discipline and to execute his duty with military precision, Jang Khan gave a lightning stroke with the gauze wire “ swatter.” But the brute escaped ! His master wanted to report him to higher authorities for dismissal, but the prospect of the tale going round the Army Secretariat in Simla prevented his doing so. It was the mark left by this attempt on the part of Jang Khan to swat the fly which gave Lincoln the identity of the man lying in the chair half asleep.

James Lincoln said to himself : “ I wonder if it is he. Let me go and look.”

He rose from his chair and walked round towards the red spot. To his very pleasant surprise he found it was Colonel Knickerbocker, recently retired from service in the Indian Army on a pension of £800, just £200 a year less than that of Lincoln himself. The Colonel looked the same as he did thirty years ago, only his face



was a little redder than ever and his moustache had gone completely white. The little hair which as a young man he carried so proudly at the back of his head had by the grace of Almighty disappeared completely. There he lay snoring his time towards the inevitable end—even though prolonged—of his life's weary and lonely journey. He was still unmarried. Colonel Knickerbocker, even though he could go to sleep at a moment's notice—a great faculty which he shared with Napoleon and never failed to emphasise to his friends—was a light sleeper, a quality valuable to all in active service. The subconscious awareness of the approaching danger of the company of a mere civilian woke the Colonel from his well deserved slumber.

“Hallo, Knicky.”

“Hallo, Jim, what the devil are you doing here?”

“Oh, just retired and am now trying to settle down.”

“What do you want to settle in this bloody country for? Oh, how I long for the Indian sun.”

“But you always called India bloody hot and longed for England, and now that you have what you wanted you are unhappy again.”

"I know, Jim. One never realises the value of a thing till one has lost it.

"What do you propose to do? Are you staying in London?"

"Yes, I am looking for a house in Putney."

"Where are you going to get any servants from? And when you do find them, you will soon realise how expensive and cheeky they are, I bet. They will help you to eat up your food, and I need hardly say anything about the smokes and drinks. When you have got them they will probably leave you without the slightest compunction or even a moment's notice. Give me my Indian servants any day. How I long to have my Indian valet. Trying to find a servant in England is worse than contracting a disease. There comes a day when every doctor says you need not come any more, but the visits to servants registry offices and the payment of booking fees is an everlasting process."

"You are a queer creature. In India you always went for those poor and humble creatures, and now you miss them and haven't a good word for the English servants. You are condemning the English servants as a class."

"Old boy, you will never give up preaching. Come and sit down. Is a *chhota peg* any use to you?"

"No thanks. I haven't started drinking or smoking yet. Where are you living, Knicky?"

"I am living in Cromwell Road. A few coloured students were staying in the same boarding house, but I very successfully organised a strike on the part of the white residents. We refused to live there unless the coloured people were turned out. One or two South Africans joined hands with me most enthusiastically and we had the whole lot of the damned niggers turned out of the place. One white girl went potty over one of these dark boys. He was well built but no better looking than most of us in that house. I asked this girl what it was that attracted her and she replied: "probably his white teeth." His teeth were no better than ours, they only looked more white against his black skin."

"That is not the right way of talking about people whose salt you have eaten in India for so many years and from whose taxes you still draw your comfortable pension. When they come to our country we should be kind to them. What

would happen if the Indians behaved towards all British people as you have done towards these Indians ?”

“ We don’t want any niggers here. Why don’t they stay in their own damned country ?”

“ If they did not come to England, they would go to other foreign countries where they would turn into revolutionaries, for you know as well as I do that the whole of Europe is jealous of our Empire, and all Indian students who go to Vienna, Berlin or the U. S. A. come back with very Left tendencies.”

“ Let them go, what use are they to us ? When they return to India they should either be jugged or shot.”

“ I will tell you what their use is. I remember a local lawyer at Lahore who had been educated in Germany. He was the head of a newly-founded company which was about to order in Europe machinery worth half a million pounds. Because the head of this firm had a German bias, having received hospitality and consideration at the hands of the people among whom he had lived for more than five years, he eventually forced his firm by one argument or another to place the order in Germany, even though the German prices in view of Empire preferen-

were ten per cent. higher than the British prices. I knew an Indian doctor who was educated at Harvard in U. S. A. and most of the medicines he prescribed were American patent stuff. If we have two thousand Indian students a year in England, we are sending out nearly five hundred of them every year as missionaries of British language and culture. Any kindness shown to those young students may be well repaid in later years."

"Do you know, Jim, you remind me of something that happened the other day."

"What?"

"An Indian booked a room by telephone. The proprietor of our small boarding house, considering that it sounded like a European name, reserved the room for him. But when he saw his coloured face, he told him that he was sorry that the room had already been let. This Indian bloke raved like a lunatic, but could not move the proprietor. The Indian said that he was a Sessions Judge in the Indian Civil Service and that this was his first visit to England, and he was greatly shocked to meet with this treatment in the capital of his King. Particularly in view of the kindnesses he had experienced in France, Germany, and in other parts

of the Continent, was this conduct on the part of a fellow-subject mystifying. Eventually he had to go away, but he remarked that the only punishment he could inflict for this affront was that the very next day he and his brother, who had come to place an order for goods worth £40,000, were going to take the first boat to Belgium and place the order there."

"I am glad you see the folly of this colour prejudice in our hotels, Knicky."

"I should not tell you this, but I will even if it bears out what you say."

"Yes."

"Another coloured fellow not a British subject turned up, and our proprietor would not admit him. But he was not having it. He went to his Minister, who lodged a protest on the part of his Government and the man had to be admitted into the same boarding house."

"When His Majesty's Indian subjects hear of these things, don't you think it is liable to make them very bitter against a country which has deserved so well at their hands in the past and which now needs the friendship of India more than ever? Luckily these cases are not many. You come across them only here and there. The vast majority of hotels and board-

ing houses have no colour prejudice and practically every visitor finds a roof for himself in London in one place or another."

"All I can say, old boy is, that the Army conquered India, and you civilians continue to get into one mess after another and we have to pull you out time and again. If only the Army could be allowed to govern India there would be peace for ever."

"Do you know that the Indians themselves would welcome a martial law and rule by the sword?"

"Are you trying to be funny, Jim?"

"No, I am serious. It is like this. The effort of the revolutionaries is always to show to their people that we oppress them, and they never feel more annoyed than when we do not make asses of ourselves. The greater the oppression the greater the resentment and quicker the rebellion. I remember reading a police dossier where a member of the secret police who somehow found a place for himself in a political body recorded the gist of the speech of his colleague, the chairman of the working committee of the revolutionary organisation."

"What did it say?"

" This record showed that the whole trend of the speech was against the then Viceroy, Lord Goulding, who was accused of being kind, gentle and sympathetic towards Indian political aspirations. He was considered most dangerous from the Indian national point of view. The speaker had expressed the hope that military rulers would be appointed and that since they were likely to rule with an iron hand the people of India would all unite and rise against the British Government."

" God save us from you civilians. You seem to be able to twist everything round to suit your own argument."

" Wouldn't you like to come back to India with me, Knicky ? There is such a lot to be done there yet."

" No fear, Jim. You can go back to that bloody country, but I am going to stay on here in England for the rest of my days. What are you doing for the next hour or two ?"

" Nothing in particular."

" Wouldn't you like to come with me to an old women's Christian association social in Kensington Palace Gardens. The widow of an old general is inviting a number of people in London to talk about village welfare work in India."



"So that's how you propose to end your days—sipping tea with old women. What use is their talk in London about village life in India? If they believe in what they say why can't they persuade chaps like you to go out and work there? I do not think it is at all fair to the Indian people that we English who acquire experience at their cost should disappear into the blue when our service is over, and leave the country denuded of all the wealth of knowledge accumulated through years of experience. There is a lot to be done in that country. We must make India strong and a living proof of England's glory. A strong and self-governing India will be the greatest asset to England. We have ruled them by force up to now. Let us capture their imagination and through service rule their hearts."

"Jim, you can go back and atone for the sins of all Britishers in the Civil Service, I mean to stick on here."

"And also atone for the sins of chaps like you, Knicky."

"If you can, old boy. So long. I'll be seein' you."

Neither London nor even England held any interest for Lincoln. He was lonely. He had

no friends. He thoroughly disliked the people he met in the club. They and their meaningless, shallow talk disgusted him. His heart was yearning for something, yet he did not know what. He still pondered over the dream he had in India. He would have liked very much to have visited his child's grave again. He was blind with sorrow and could not think what was the right thing to do. He found himself at the dead end of a road and did not know which way to move. As he walked, with every step his thoughts went back to God, the Omniscient, the most merciful and kind. It was after a whole week of bewilderment and maddening existence that he retired to bed one evening with a prayer in his heart appealing to God for guidance. That night he saw a vision. His mind's eye had been opened by the merciful God. He could now see what was hidden from him before.

He again saw the handsome bearded young man holding Marjorie by the hand. This time Lincoln could see a halo of light round the head of the man. His face was all aglow with spiritual light. He was smiling, so was Marjorie. His look portended great tidings for Lincoln. Some good news was perhaps in

store for him. Suddenly Lincoln noticed that the good man had a glistening knife in his hand. It looked sharp. He advanced towards Lincoln, who felt very frightened and began to perspire, but before he could move the good man had torn open his side and pulled out Lincoln's heart, which he now held in his hand. Marjorie was looking pleased. He was surprised to find his daughter looking happy over what had happened to him. He felt no pain.

Now the good man muttered something which Lincoln could not understand, but he noticed that a streak of light from the good man's halo was striking his heart, which was gradually changing colour. It became brown, then it looked clean like water, and then it turned white. Soon it looked like glass. Finally, it shone like a diamond. Pure white it looked radiating light all round like the halo round the good man's head. It was replaced in his body. His daughter congratulated him on his elevation into the sphere of spiritual kings. A voice from the unseen again rang in his ears :

"You are purified with the light of God which is in you now. Go and serve his people who need you most. Wash their wounds in-

flicted by misery with the light which is now in you. You will find God himself among the poor and the low. Your place is with those who are shunned even by their own kith and kin. But as the mother can never part from her child, so can God not part from his children. You are of Him. Seek their company and the service of the lowly. Your heart will now lead you to the place where you will achieve still higher godliness. Your heart will now see what it could not before. Go back to those who need you most. Show your repentance for lost opportunity of the service of God and show the way of repentance to your people who have yet not made full use of the opportunity which God provided them with. Alleviate the misery of suffering humanity. Repent and atone for the sins of your people."

These words Mr. Lincoln went on repeating in his mind the whole night long. He had a warm corner in his heart for India and her people. Throughout his service he had lived a saintly life, felt for the people whose misery and poverty he would willingly alleviate if he could, even if it meant paying back to the people every penny he had received

by way of his salary. He recollected many things he had done which, though legally just, were not equitable, and he wanted to atone for all these by giving to the people every ounce of his energy for the rest of his life.

Next morning as he woke up he found an urge in him to go out for a long walk. Lincoln was an enlightened man and had no delusions about what he saw in dreams. He knew that his dreams were but the result of his own hallucinations. Whatever passed in his mind in the daytime often returned to him in his dreams. In the morning he pictured to himself a scene in India where he would have told his dream to Sher Khan, who would immediately have ascribed it all to God. That morning he felt like going out of the heart of London to breathe some fresh air. His mind urged him on to go to Wimbledon Common. He was almost driven there after lunch, and as he reached the windmill in the middle of the common he was pulled along as if by a rope towards the wooden benches lying on the south side of the golf club building. He sat on one of these facing the sun. He had not been there long when a man suddenly appeared from nowhere and took his seat beside him. He had

a stern appearance, and against the custom of the British people started the conversation without an introduction.

"It is a lovely day," he said to Lincoln.

"Yes, I love the sun, and how I wish I were back in India.

"That is interesting, where were you in India?"

"I served in the Punjab," said Lincoln.

"So you know Taran Taran?"

"Of course I do. Why?"

"Someone was talking to me only the other day and told me that a man was needed there badly. He asked me if I would go."

"What did you say?" enquired Lincoln.

"I told him that I had a wife and child and a home and could not possibly go back to a hot climate where I had spent fifteen years."

"Where were you?"

"Madras?"

"What was the climate like?"

"Hot for three months."

"And the rest of the year?"

"Hotter."

"What were you doing there?"

"Mission work. There are six million Indian Christians in India now."

"Where does this man live?" enquired Lincoln.

"Which man?"

"The one who asked you to go to Taran Taran."

"156 Kensington Court, Knightsbridge."

"Thanks. I am very glad to have met you. Good-bye."

Mr. Lincoln there and then made up his mind to go back to India, back to the Punjab, a province he had served so well. As he walked back to the bus terminus at the Green Man at the top of Putney Hill, he smiled as the thought of Sher Khan ran across his mind. He was sure that were he to tell Sher Khan what had transpired on the bench near the windmill, Sher Khan would at once come forward with the suggestion that the stranger in the bench was an English esoteric saint. Sher Khan had told him on many occasions that this order extended throughout the whole world, and that it had no colour bar and all of its members worked under one command. Sher Khan's theory was that this order was based on the purity of mind and spiritualelevationoftheindividuals

concerned. Lincoln imagined to himself how Sher Khan would have exaggerated things to the Indian people about his Sahib's saintliness. He thus amused himself with the thoughts of Sher Khan until his bus arrived near his flat.

He thought over the matter for a few days, and after consulting a few friends and paying a visit to 156 Kensington Court decided to go back to India—to Taran Taran. He started to pick up his luggage and sent a cable to Sher Khan informing him that he would be reaching Bombay four weeks hence. During the whole of his stay in England he had received no letters from any of his servants except the mug cook. He was the only dishonest servant he had, and Mr. Lincoln was sure that so long as his cook continued to write he was out of employment.



## CHAPTER IX

Crossing the channel in a ferry-boat train he caught the P. & O. steamer "Strathnaver" at Marseilles. When the ship was about to sail, the deck steward followed by a messenger of Thomas Cook & Sons, came rushing up to him and said : "Somebody wishes to see you, Sir." The messenger saluted and presented Lincoln with a sealed envelope marked urgent. It was an air mail letter from Mr. Montague Marriott and read as follows :

" Dear Mr. Lincoln,

Having heard a great deal about you from many friends, I had a desire to meet you personally. When I had traced your whereabouts I was very disappointed to find that you had already left for India. I am, however, taking this opportunity of writing what I wished to say to you and am sending the letter by a special R.A.F. plane.

You know as well as anyone how strained the relations between some of the Indian leaders

and ourselves are. It is no use going into the whys and the wherefores of it; the plain fact is that there is an urgent need for removing this mistrust from the Indian mind. I do not claim that the Indian people have no cause for the present state of affairs nor do I claim that our own pronouncements over the Indian political aspirations have been as explicit as were necessary to remove all doubts of our intentions about the future constitution of India. At the moment we have reached a stage when whatever we say is doubted by some leaders and they appear to suspect that we wish to mark time at the moment, but that when we are through the present troubles we mean not to honour any of the public declarations we have made recently. Nothing is farther from the truth. Our policy has been consistently directed towards developing self-governing institutions in India. Proof of our sincerity of purpose can be seen in the fully responsible elected parliaments and ministries which are working so successfully in all provinces of India. In the view of some Indian political leaders the progress towards Indian self-government may have been slow, but those of us who have given considerable thought to these problems are satisfied in our

own conscience that the steadiness of this progress is enabling India to settle its internal political, religious and communal problems, and that when the day does arrive for them to take charge of all their affairs, they will find themselves not only in possession of a smooth working political and administrative machinery, but that they will also be in the most fortunate position of having amicably settled the communal problems, which might easily have thrown their country into a civil war and been responsible for a great deal of unnecessary bloodshed. Posterity will, I hope, judge us in our true light. What is really needed at the moment is a means by which we can make the Indian leaders believe that what we say we mean to carry out. For this purpose we need someone whose word the Indian people will trust. I am informed by all those who should know India that there is no Briton more worthy of the Indian confidence than yourself. I have had long reports—spread over several years—of the great esteem in which the Indian public hold you, and may I be permitted to say that in view of your life-long devotion to the people of India you have thoroughly deserved that confidence. At this critical juncture your king and

your country need you. There are mischief-makers spreading rumours that what people like me say has not the sanction of the British Government. Please assure the Indian people that from now onwards it is the decided opinion of the majority of Members of Parliament, to make India completely self-governing like the other Dominions within the shortest period possible. Please also tell them that the only thing which stands between them and full dominion status is their own disunity. The moment we are assured that if we hand over the Army and every other department of the Government of India into Indians' hands there will be no civil war or bloodshed in the country, that very moment we can hand over everything completely into the hands of the Indian Federal Parliament. I hope you will agree with me that we cannot allow our troops or the Indian troops to be used by one political party to shoot down other subjects of His Majesty the King in India. True that the voice of the majority must prevail, but we cannot ignore the fact that the ninety million Muslim minority—if they remain as bitter against the Hindu Congress as they are to-day—will break any constitution. Another ninety million half-caste Hindus do not see eye

to eye with the Congress. One-third of India is under the rule of the Indian Princes, with whom we have treaties of alliance and friendship. We are asked to step out and by our unilateral action to hand over our obligations in this respect to the Congress without the consent of the Princes and in entire disregard of the wishes and feelings of minorities. Even if we were to hand over the Indian government to one political party are they quite sure that the Princes with their strong armies will not capture the rest of India and divide it amongst themselves. It is as difficult for His Majesty's Government to join hands with a political party in British India and suppress the Princely order as it is for them to join hands with the Indian Princes and suppress what constitutional progress has already been achieved in British India. India is one administrative unit but only because of the British, and if we were to step aside to-morrow without first having been assured of a Hindu-Muslim accord, we are afraid that India will again break up into small units as has been the case with her through most of her chequered political career.

Nor can any one ignore the need for giving due protection to minorities who have always

stood loyally by us during the last sixty years of political strife and unrest. The British have often been accused of sacrificing their friends to please their foes in India. Here again our critics have misjudged us. No matter how much trouble we have been put to by any political party, we cannot deny the fact that they have all fought for the political rights of their country and it has never been the policy of the British Parliament to be vindictive towards those who wish to achieve for their country what we ourselves value so much in our own.

I should be personally beholden to you if you would be so good as to explain to the Indian political leaders who do not agree with us that as things appear the whole political freedom of the world is at stake. There stands nothing between the dictators and world domination except the armies of France and England. This much I know that our worst critics in India are at one with us in fighting for freedom against the forces of oppression. I do not wish to ask your support in securing the co-operation of India for us during a future war. That co-operation will be given in the fullest measure and with the largeness of heart which is worthy of the Peoples and

Princes of India. My immediate concern is to make those in India who still doubt our motives believe that it is our determined policy to see India a full dominion. She can have this for the asking provided we are assured that Hindus and Muslims are united in that demand. Our immediate concern is to remove suspicion and make my Indian fellow subjects happy. We appreciate all that India has done in the past and I want India to know that no one will be more happy than the British people to see her become an equal partner with Britain in this great brotherhood of British nations, the pride of our race, our great Commonwealth.

If you can use your good offices in making the Indian people believe in the sincerity of our purpose, this country will be extremely grateful.

Yours sincerely,  
Montague Marriott."

Lincoln read through this very important letter carefully. There was no time to answer it as the ship was ready to sail. Even if there had been time, he would not have answered it without first putting himself in touch with up-to-date Indian public opinion on this burning question.

Mr. Montague Marriott was an English gentleman who was comfortably off. He was about fifty-five and had been a Member of Parliament for several years, though at the moment he was no longer in the House. He had travelled a great deal mainly with a view to educating and fitting himself for further service of his country. He had even held office in His Majesty's Government and exercised a considerable influence in official and other political circles. He kept himself in touch with most of the foreign diplomats and his constant endeavour was to win more and more friends for his country. He attended most of the public political meetings, luncheons and dinners in London. He was the head of a political non-official organisation whose object it was to send public-spirited men into foreign countries to make political speeches and tell foreign people what a great country England was and how fine its people. He lost no opportunity of picking up likely persons who had in them the makings of Empire builders. Marriott felt that in Lincoln he had discovered a man who could render great service to this country in promoting better relations with the Indian people, who held him in great esteem for his past services.



As the ship entered the port of Bombay Lincoln noticed a very large crowd of people—unusually large—waiting on the quay side. “Good heavens,” he said to himself, “are we in for more trouble? I do hope there will be no shooting down of the demonstrators.”

He knew that on board his ship were members of a British scientific commission and a trade delegation. For some time in the past the shoe trade in England had suffered a setback. The lizard skins for which the ladies of England had developed a special taste had been wearing very badly. The scientific commission were going to investigate the possible effect of a diet of lizards on their skins. Reports had been received that the lizards in India had taken a special liking to the meat of the boneless Indian fly, and that calcium deficiency in their food was really responsible for the poor quality of the skin. The commission were, with the assistance of the Council of Agricultural Research in Delhi, going to investigate and report on the possibility of breeding a fly with plenty of bone. Failing this the trade delegation—who were eminently suited for negotiating trade pacts on account of their

experience of the East and its people — were to attempt to make the Indian Government agree to encourage snake-breeding, for the skin of this reptile was considered very hardy.

But in view of the deep-rooted animosity towards this beautiful creature on the part of the Indian public, it was essential to have on this delegation economists of world-wide reputation who would stand some chance of successfully proving to the Indian Government the economic advantage to the poor Indian villagers of breeding snakes and selling their skins of varying colours and qualities in the European markets.

Among the members of the delegation there was a man who did not look as if he were in business at all. He was not pale or haggard. He bore a healthy appearance. One man on board the steamer was an Indian Police officer who had just finished his course with the London constabulary. He said that he had seen this man occasionally in Scotland Yard. There was a rumour going round that he had somehow or another wangled his way into this delegation to keep an eye on the members.

Mr. Lincoln thought that perhaps the people had collected there to meet the commission,

and as usual he expected a number of black flags from the old stock which was kept permanently for all such occasions, and handed over to hirelings of one political organization or another as the case might be. He quite expected to see the flags with "Himon go back" still written on them, for the last commission to land in India was the Himon Commission.

The delegation had disembarked and no one took any notice of them. "Why are there people collected?" said Lincoln to himself, "they have garlands and baskets full of flowers."

As he stepped on to the ladder there rose one great shout: "Lincoln Sahib ki jai"—"Three cheers for Mr. Lincoln." Lincoln had written ahead to reserve a room for himself at the East & West Hotel, Ballard Pier. The atmosphere in the country was quite different from what it was when he had left it a few years ago. Suspicion and distrust, though not quite removed, were much dissipated. It was, however, not for any political reason that the people had gathered to welcome him. His orderly Sher Khan had been in Bombay for a fortnight and he had told so many tales about the virtues of his master that he actually made him

out to be a saint and a man whose one idea in life was to serve the Indian people. It was a group of these personal friends of Sher Khan and other residents of the place where he had been staying who had turned out in such large numbers. Amongst them there were many Punjabees who served as watchmen in the houses of the merchant princes of Bombay. There were a still larger number who were merchant seamen. Sher Khan was determined to show to his master that even if there were no tehsildar present, he was capable of getting up a jolly good welcome for him.

From Bombay Lincoln posted the following letter :

“ Dear Mr. Marriott,

I regret the delay in answering your letter but I have not wasted a moment ever since I arrived here. I have had long talks with Mr. Ram Lal, leader of the Hindus, with Omar Ali, the leader of the Muslims, and with Kincaidker, the leader of the Depressed Classes. I have had also the good fortune to meet an Indian Prince at the race course, who poured his heart out to me. Through my orderly Sher Khan I have also been in touch with the poor Indian in the street.

In order to understand the Indian political situation and to convey to you a true picture of the intricate problem, I need time which is not at my disposal. My own important work awaits me at Taran Taran, and in spite of all the sympathy I have for you in your difficult task I am afraid I cannot allow myself to be diverted from my real duty. I can, however, tell you this much, that the people in the East, having had a long experience of promises held out to them by different rulers and some not fulfilled when difficult times were over, now place no credence in mere verbal declarations, and insist on something more than mere promises. I showed your letter to some people and they remarked that they had seen that sort of stuff before. You know as well as I do that it is human nature to overlook those promises which have been fulfilled and to speak of only those, no matter how small, which have not been honoured. But I can assure you that, even though the people here are sulky, the heart of India as a whole has undergone a definite change in favour of England. A strong India will be a great asset, a weak India is a liability. Tell your parliament, not to be afraid of taking a

bold step and doing the right thing by India and the Commonwealth of British peoples.

Yours sincerely,  
James Lincoln"

Having finished his stay in Bombay, Lincoln proceeded to follow his original plan. He caught the Punjab Mail one evening. Sher Khan had not, during the short time that his master spent in Bombay, asked him any questions. It would not have been loyal or brave of him to want to know where his Sahib was going. Wherever he went, Sher Khan would follow. Lincoln bought the tickets and gave Sher Khan his. The orderly noticed that his master did not call him Jamedar at all. That title belonged only to those orderlies who were in Government service. He also noticed that his Sahib bought a second class ticket. He could see its green colour, which matched the colour of the second class coaches on the North-western Railway. His Sahib had always travelled first class. He could not have done otherwise while in service. He had to keep up the dignity of his office and he could not draw first class travelling allowances if he had travelled second.

“But no ; perhaps the Sahib is on his own and has not returned to India on Government duty,” thought Sher Khan. “But what of that, I like him all the more. He has come nearer to me. In the second class compartment he will be sitting among my people. Oh, I shall like my Sahib all the more now.”

As Sher Khan took his seat in the servants' compartment adjoining that of Mr. Lincoln, he found next to him a man who was in the service of another Sahib. This man told Sher Khan that he never remained in the service of a white man for more than a month or two. He found it a paying proposition to go and meet the Sahibs when they landed in Bombay, fresh from England, ignorant of the value of things in India. Usually they handed him 70 or 80 rupees for coolies, tonga hire and other expenses. It was customary for him to overcharge them and make them pay through the nose, and the moment they reached their destination and before they were able to find out from their own fellow-countrymen about his rascalities he parted company with them and went back to Bombay to seek a new victim. This man came from the United Provinces and he had started his life as a syce and gradually worked

his way up through the kitchen to a well-qualified valet.

As Sher Khan sat with one leg crossed over the other, he began to think what it was that brought Mr. Lincoln back to India. He said to himself :

“India is not an attractive country to stay in. Its plains are particularly unsuited for the white people to live in during the summer. With his small pension my Sahib will not be able to go to the hills in the hot weather in the fashion of all other white men. It may be that he does not feel the heat, but after a year or two he is bound to feel the heat more and more. My Sahib has always been something of a mystery to me. He never went very much to the hills even during his service. He had some queer habits, but there never appeared anything seriously wrong with him. A few white men did not mix very much with him, but that was no loss to him. He avoided their company himself. It is true that he felt himself at home with us Indians, but that is no reason why he should have come back.

“He couldn't have returned to get more money, for there is none to be had in this country. We are a very poor people. Moreover,



he has his pension already and that should be sufficient for his purposes. He is not a greedy man. He could not have come back for money, nor for power, he has wielded that long enough in his lifetime. It is true that people who have been at the top of the political ladder and wielded power and authority feel unhappy when they are out of office and when they have to come down to earth at the close of their careers, but my Sahib was never inclined that way. Maybe he has come back for the service of humanity, but there again there were plenty of chances in his own country to serve his own people if he wanted to serve the poor. Has he come back because he could find no employment there? A man of his experience could have found plenty of work, paid or honorary, in several institutions. If the worst came to the worst, he could have gone into a hotel and taken a job there, but he is not the sort of man who would want to do that kind of work. He has not come back to find employment for himself. I know that the English people do not consider it a disgrace to work with their hands, and I am sure that my Sahib could have got plenty of work to do if he had wanted it. England was the place for him to work in if he wanted work,

for there nobody would have known that he was a big bug. Here in India if he works with his hands people will be flabbergasted to see a white man working in that manner. I wonder why he has come back to this country and exposed himself to dangers of all sorts. Maybe, like another Sahib I know of, who commuted half his pension and lost it in a business gamble Mr. Lincoln has become poor, but even then he would still have half of his pension left, because that is the portion which can never be commuted.

“Perhaps remorse has brought him here. He had been drawing money from a poor country all his life and he wanted to pay it back in the form of labour of love. But there again he could have refused to draw his pension. No, that would have been wrong on his part, for his pension is his lawfully-earned money, earned with the sweat of his brow and as permissible for him as “the milk of his mother”. Then what is it that has brought him back? Perhaps he did not come back of his own accord. Someone drove him out of his own country and pushed him into India. Was it God Almighty who arranged things that my Sahib should come back to India? Is he fortunate enough

to be selected by God as his instrument for the execution of a special purpose of His ? I know I have often been told by a *mulla* in the mosque that God confers kingdoms of this world and of the hereafter on whomsoever He will. There are people who receive the sceptres of this world but their glory dies with them. There are those who are chosen by God for spiritual kingdoms, and the glory of these lives for ever, and after death they can sit on the right hand of God and live in peace and happiness. God must have chosen him for some work in this country. But were there no Indians who could be selected by God ? It may be that he has been chosen for some awe-inspiring work. It may be that he was such a good man that God wanted to reward him by persuading him to do this work. Perhaps he has had no choice in the matter ; it was the will of God that forced him. There is something mysterious about this man of mine. He seems to talk little and his face is so charming and there seems to be a halo of spiritual light around his face, and when he speaks he is so soft and gentle that every word of his sinks into your heart. When I see him now instantly my heart begins to bend towards virtue and mercy and forgiveness.

I wonder what this man is up to ? I wish I knew."

The second servant who had been sitting quietly so far, woke Sher Khan from his reverie by asking a question.

"Has your Sahib come back to make people Christians in this country?"

"No, he has never spoken a word of this sort to anybody all the time he has been here, nor has he mentioned even now that he has come back to convert us to Christianity. My Sahib is not that sort at all. I know him well. Ordinarily, the people who come out here to try and make us Christians are the money-grabbing sort, in whose company you have to be even for five minutes ; they come out here to make careers for themselves, to earn their living, they do not come to seek God or the service of God."

"Then why has your Sahib come back ?"

"I don't know, but I can tell you this much, that he has no selfish motive at all. The blessings of God seem to be with him. He is a very good and saintly man. I wish he has taken me into his confidence and told me what he has come for."

Sher Khan was suddenly quiet again. He did not want to talk to this inquisitive chap,

and only wished to be left alone to think for himself. He revolved things in his mind and wondered whether it was divine wisdom that took Mr. Lincoln's daughter and wife away from him, thereby setting him free to do some task which he otherwise would never have undertaken. He also wondered whether it was the prayers of the poor in India which had persuaded God to select Mr. Lincoln for a particular work. Of one thing Sher Khan was sure, that Mr. Lincoln had lived a very saintly life and he deserved well at the hands of men and God, and it might be that Mr. Lincoln was to go down in history as a great man. In his opinion, Mr. Lincoln was truly a chosen man of God. He cared little what he actually was coming out to do.

When Sher Khan was about to lie down and sleep, two lawyers, who had failed to find a place in any of the second class compartments, mainly because they were all locked from the inside by sleeping passengers, jumped into this servants' compartment as the train was moving away. From the moment they sat on the hard wooden seats they started jabbering away about various political leaders and their speeches, and discussed all the secret plans which were afoot

to make their country free. They commented on the different panaceas adumbrated by the various political parties for curing the ills of Hindustan, but they could not conscientiously say if anything practical had been evolved for freeing their country from the foreign yoke. Sher Khan, who had got tired of this boring conversation, turned to one of the politicians and said :

“ Shall I tell you a story by way of change?”

“ Yes, do please.”

“ When the new canal colony was about to start in my district, there was an overseer going about the jungle measuring land and putting up boundary pillars. Some cattle thieves caught him and robbed him of everything except the waterlevel, for which they had no use. They divested him of all his clothes except his khaki jodhpur breeches. These they did not know how to remove. So they arrested him and took him to an old and experienced thief who was smoking his *huga* a few bushes away. After having given the matter his most careful consideration his final orders were :

“ Tell the fellow to get out as he got in.”

As Sher Khan relapsed into silence the two

lawyers looked at each other, rather puzzled at the sudden termination of the story, and could not imagine why it had been told them. Sher Khan guessed this much and said :

“ You want our country to be free, don't you ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And you can't think of a way of turning the white people out.”

“ No.”

“ Do as the old thief did. Put the white man into a corner and force him to tell you the way you can turn him out. He who got in, alone knows how to get out. You see, gentlemen, the European in the last is like a baby.”

“ How ? ”

“ Easy to take but difficult to get rid of.”

The two lawyers stared in admiration at the simple and practical fellow from the North. They talked no more and Sher Khan succeeded in his object of ensuring peace and quiet for a well deserved slumber.

The train reached Taran Taran about dawn. The red disc of the sun could be seen rising by the time Mr. Lincoln and Sher Khan got out of the train and secured a few coolies to take charge of the luggage. There was quite a crowd

at the station. Not only were there people entraining and detraining, but most of the other passengers had also poured out onto the platform to stretch their legs. From this crowd emerged an old man dressed simply like most other men, in a loin cloth, a shirt and a turban. He had a large red printed handkerchief in his hand. He walked up to Mr. Lincoln and said to him :

“The Superintendent died last night, Hurry to your task.”

Sher Khan saw this man too. He said to his Sahib :

“Sir, that is the weaver who disappeared from my village many years ago and has not been heard of since. We all think he is of the order of esoteric saints and leads a hidden and secret life.”

“Call him, Sher Khan. I want to ask him some questions.”

Sher Khan ran to look for the man. But he was gone. Sher Khan asked everyone on the platform and no one gave him any clue. As a matter of fact, no one had seen him at all. Sher Khan came back and told his master that the weaver could not be found. He also volunteered the observation that these men were



liable to disappear into thin air and that no one could see them unless they wanted to be seen.

As Lincoln and Sher Khan left the station they engaged a tonga, and when their luggage was placed in it the tonga driver asked "Where, Sir?" Sher Khan kept quiet, for he did not know and looked back from the front seat, at his Sahib, who was seated behind him on the comfortable portion of the vehicle. Mr. Lincoln said :

"Leper Asylum."

Sher Khan's heart sank within him. "My God, what have I let myself in for?" he said to himself. He, like most others of his countrymen, dreaded the mere sight of lepers. He had seen some of them as a boy when a group passed by his village. These lepers were seated on small ponies, for they had no feet and no hand. It was a wonder how they got off their ponies and fed themselves. There were some women lepers also. Their very sight was so terrifying that villagers gave them money, food and clothes to prevent them coming into their streets. He recollected the occasion when these lepers asked for the house of the village headman, and when they arrived there they demanded five rupees. The wife of the headman gave

them one rupee, but they insisted on pushing their way into her courtyard. She gave them another rupee, but they still demanded five. One of the lepers jumped off his horse and squatted on the ground. The others threatened to alight from their mounts and camp there for the night. She had no more cash in the house. Her husband was away. She ran into her neighbour's house and borrowed, three rupees and hurriedly threw these on the ground and begged the lepers to go away. She had told her children to hide inside their house and they had locked themselves in. The lepers having extracted this money went on begging in the village till they felt there was no more money to be had. Sher Khan also knew that the Sircar had no law under which these men could be arrested and sent to a home. Even if there had been a law, the Sircar could not have found a servant willing to touch the lepers and arrest them, for all the people lived in great dread of this disease. They feared that it was so contagious that the mere sight of a leper was liable to afflict others.

"I have eaten the salt of Mr. Lincoln," said Sher Khan to himself, "and even if he is going to serve in the leper asylum I am not going to

desert him. I shall be true to his salt and not disgrace the name of my family and my ancestors by being a coward, even though I lose my life. I am afraid it will be too dangerous for me ever to go back and see my wife and children. I wonder if they are liable to catch the disease from the rupee coins that I shall send them by postal money order from here !”

These thoughts were still passing through his mind when the four-mile journey to the leper asylum came to an end.

As the tonga entered the precincts of the asylum, Sher Khan noticed that the lepers were tying up their bundles of clothes and getting ready to scatter all over the country. The white man who had been superintendent of the institution had died suddenly the previous night. There were no other office-bearers and no staff except those who were engaged and paid by the superintendent. This gentleman had built up this home during the course of the last thirty years and paid for it either from his own pocket or with money collected from his friends in England. There were a thousand lepers segregated at this centre. Some had walked from villages in the Madras Presidency, and others had moved down from some of the

states in the Simla hills. Mr. Lincoln's predecessor had introduced a system under which the children of these lepers—for many had with them their wives, who were also leprous—were removed from the company of their parents before they were three years old, and thus saved from leprosy. These girls and boys were educated and married to each other and sent out into the world. There was nothing to be done for the older people. They could only be helped to end their days without an aggravation of their misery. This home had been started in the hope that in another fifty years leprosy could be removed from India as it was from Scotland towards the end of the nineteenth century.

As soon as the lepers saw Mr. Lincoln they guessed that a successor to the deceased superintendent had arrived, and they untied their bundles of clothing and went back into their small huts.

Mr. Lincoln had left a good name behind him when he retired, but the people had treated him like every other I.C.S. officer. Some thought he was kind-hearted and others that he was clever in hiding his inner feelings, but no one ever thought that he would ever make a

personal sacrifice for the people of India. When he took charge of the asylum all the papers were full of praise for him, but no one ever sent him a penny nor did a single person ever volunteer to assist him in his noble task. But he gradually acquired a great name among the people, who began to treat him like a saint.

Ali, the son of the headman of Jamalpur, had by this time been elected an M.P., from the rural Muslim constituency where his home was situated. He had by now seen the Punjab Government budget himself as it was presented in the Provincial Parliament, and had been confirmed in the view that what Mr. Lincoln had told him during the interview he had with him many years ago was correct. He was so much touched by the news that Mr. Lincoln was at Taran Taran—the man who knew all his family and had spent so many years near his home—that he immediately made up his mind to go and see him.

The following Saturday Ali took the morning train to Taran Taran, and as he entered the leper home grounds he tucked up his trousers as high as he could to avoid their touching the ground where the lepers walked. Sher Khan was quite pleased to see him and so was Mr.

Lincoln. Ali extended his hand to catch Mr. Lincoln's, but the fear of leprosy crept over him and he pulled it back and tried to get over the awkward situation by raising the same hand up to his forehead by way of a salute. Mr. Lincoln just smiled and did not mind Ali avoiding a contact with him. Ali would not sit down. He said that he was going to follow his father's example and keep standing while he talked to the Sahib. He was really afraid of the chair being contaminated.

Ali said to Mr. Lincoln :

" I have come here with a purpose."

" What is it ?"

" To apologise to you."

" What for ?"

" I was very rude to you during the interview. I did not know then what I do now, that you have a heart of gold and that you love my country and my people even more than any of us. I misjudged you then because you were a paid servant. But your coming here to do this work in an honorary capacity has captivated the heart of every Indian. You have enslaved us with your kindness. Do you remember what your parting words were at that interview ?"

"No."

"You said—'I hope you will have a good word for us some day.' I can tell you this much, that I have no words good enough for you."

"How is our friend Professor Goswami?"

"Still thinking out a plan to make India free."

"Give him my salaams and tell him that if he wants India to be free, he must shut up Ram Lal and Omar Ali in one house in the Himalayas and tell them to make up their differences within twelve months, and if they cannot they must agree to divide up the inheritance, else they will never enjoy its use. He used to have long talks with me, Ali, and one day he politely told me that no matter how good-hearted an Englishman might be his sympathies and loyalties were always for his own home. Ask him now what he thinks of us. Ali, have you done anything useful in Parliament."

"Yes. I successfully piloted a private bill for the suppression of brothels."

"Bravo, Ali."

The following year Ali became Minister for Public Health and made a substantial grant to Mr. Lincoln, from Government revenues, for the upkeep of this leper asylum. Lincoln went

to Lahore to see Ali in his grand office with half a dozen orderlies at his door. Ali came out to receive him.

As one orderly opened the Minister's door for Mr. Lincoln another remarked "Allah ki shan dekho". Look at the wonderful ways of Providence.





## FOR THE PEDANT

There is no such village as Jamalpur, but dozens in the Shahpur District not bearing that name will answer my description. Similarly there is no dearth of Lincolns, Khadims, Sher Khans, Alis and Gobinds in the Punjab.

Bucknall is a man who epitomises the idiosyncrasies of over half a dozen men who have gone out to all parts of India during the last fifty years or so, and done what Bucky does. One man could not have been allowed to enjoy all these great qualities for long outside a mental home.

Pirkaudi is played every year at one place or another between Shahpur and Jhelum or Shahpur and Mianwali. I can also show you a place where the "human rats" live.

The discussions between Gulshan and Chandra or among the literati at the professor's house have a religious, historical and sociological background. The points discussed are not imaginary but live issues.

I have given you historical facts, only the names of persons are fictitious. The period of the book is roughly 1905-25.

49 PUTNEY HILL,  
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FIROZ NOON

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